

**THE POLITICS AND PROCESS OF PARTNERSHIP:  
A CASE STUDY OF THE ABORIGINAL HEALING AND WELLNESS STRATEGY**

by

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores new Aboriginal-Canadian relations that seek to move beyond colonial social relations and discourses. While both Aboriginal and Canadian societies may desire a just and workable relationship, competing visions and understandings of what constitutes the post-colonial operate as a sub-text in actual policy negotiations between Aboriginal and Canadian governments. Cultural difference, as articulated through Aboriginal epistemology and embodied in the Aboriginal vision of co-existence, emerges as an unexplored terrain in liberal discourse. This helps to explain why many attempts at dialogue fail at the negotiating table.

In addressing the issue of difference I argue that while liberal discourses may recognize Aboriginality as part of a pluralistic worldview, the failure to enter into and embrace the content of that difference prevents new, truly bi-cultural relations from emerging. Because the content of difference is not entered into, an important epistemological dimension is left out of most analyses of Aboriginal-Canadian relations. A discussion of Aboriginal epistemology and postmodern positions on the issue of difference offers a partial resolution and way forward. Following Leonard, a move from domination and oppression requires a dual commitment to difference *and* to solidarity that is based on a different ethic, that of interdependence.

To understand the implications of this possibility for Aboriginal-Canadian co-existence, I analyze the development of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy as a case study in joint policy-making involving a partnership between Aboriginal organizations and government ministries in Ontario. As a unique exercise, this partnership provides an instructive example of how such relations can be constructed when Aboriginal difference is taken into account and employed. Based on participants' accounts and my own engagement with Aboriginal epistemology, this case study reveals key dynamics in terms of the politics and the processes that can facilitate and impede movement towards an Aboriginal post-colonial vision of co-existence. The journey from the colonial to the post-colonial involves a shift from dichotomous ways of conceptualizing difference in relation to sameness towards a more wholistic, inclusive and dynamic conception that incorporates difference *and* commonality discovered in the process of co-operating together.

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The task of a critical social work practice and education might be seen as the search for alternative sources of knowledge, both those that have been subordinated as part of the social mechanisms of class, gender, and ethnic domination and those that have flourished outside the discourses of objective, scientific knowledge, in literature, myth, and folklore.

Peter Leonard (1994:22)

## INTRODUCTION

Since the 1960s Canadian governments, at the federal and more recently the provincial level, have reiterated the need and the desire to establish "a new relationship" with Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Beyond its rhetorical value, as a hallmark of successive policy documents from the Pearson government to the present, the term "new relationship" has acted as a container for a series of unresolved issues which lie at the heart of Aboriginal-Canadian relations today. In other words, Aboriginal-Canadian relations are a contested domain (Fleras 1996). As such, the last thirty years have been defined by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal policy analysts alike as a period of intense negotiation. In effect, what is being negotiated is the Aboriginal subject position in Canada (Kulchyski 1988). What is at stake is the survival of Aboriginal peoples as Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

From my own perspective as a non-Aboriginal Canadian, I understand the current state of Aboriginal-Canadian relations as a negotiation between two paradigms: the colonial and the post-colonial. Conceptually, the colonial paradigm no longer fits while the post-colonial paradigm exists only as possibility; in practice, elements of the colonial co-exist and operate alongside the post-colonial. Aboriginal rights may be entrenched in the Constitution but with no collective agreement as to their meaning, dominant "national" interests continually supersede Aboriginal

interests. When this occurs, Aboriginal claims to self-determination as distinct peoples and nations are ignored by the Canadian State with the result that Aboriginal peoples are relegated in policy terms, to the status of either a disadvantaged ethnic minority or another interest group competing for the scarce resources of a supposedly neutral State. Thus, although continual calls for a "new relationship" signals the need for a paradigm shift, I agree with Fleras that "what we appear to be witnessing is, arguably, a paradigm "muddle"" (1996:170).

What does exist currently are different and competing visions of Canada. The Aboriginal vision of co-existence emanating from Aboriginal worldviews combines self-rule and shared rule. For reasons which will become clear in the first part of this thesis, I identify the Aboriginal vision of co-existence as the post-colonial challenge. This vision stands in sharp contrast to the forms of limited autonomy acceptable within the philosophical framework of liberalism. As the dominant and defining political discourse in Canada, I identify liberalism (in its classic and reformist versions) with colonialism. In my view, the current paradigm muddle results from an unresolved tension within liberalism, in particular, its inability to recognize difference.

The first purpose of this thesis to examine these different visions and to understand the muddle through a clear articulation of some key issues and debates surrounding Aboriginal-Canadian relations in this current period of negotiation. My interest in doing so is to uncover those processes and positions which facilitate decolonization and thus, move us collectively toward relations which are more egalitarian, just, and emancipatory.

It is not surprising in this period of intense negotiation regarding the Aboriginal subject position in Canada that competing discourses have resulted from these substantially different visions of Canada. A major review of 222 policy documents covering the period (1965-1992)

undertaken for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) reveals four competing discourses: the assimilationist position, the 'citizens plus' paradigm, a rights-based approach and a sovereigntist position (RCAP 1996a: 47-48). The authors comment that the resulting incoherence in terms of policy "is perfectly appropriate given the incoherence of the prevailing public philosophy in the country" (p. 48). The study concluded that at times dialogue itself has remained a soliloquy, at other times it has produced a dialogue which then failed, and least frequently, a successful dialogue has resulted (p. 343).

The creation of a new relationship in terms of Aboriginal-Canadian relations depends on dialogue not soliloquy. Yet dialogue often fails:

When efforts are made to find mutually agreeable strategies or solutions, the process is more akin to anti-dialogue than dialogue. The outcome does not usually produce what the people thought they had expressed as wants or needs. This outcome affirms that the process did not result in the creation or recreation of knowledge which characterizes dialogue or reciprocal interaction between two or more parties committed to finding mutually satisfactory answers. Consultations between Indigenous leaders and government officials and Indigenous officials and community people often fail to satisfy the purpose of the quest (Mussell 1993: 118).

It is the nature of what constitutes constructive dialogue that defines the second purpose of this thesis. From my perspective, the post-colonial challenge as represented by the Aboriginal vision of co-existence, contains two inter-related prerequisites necessary for constructive dialogue: the ability of Canadian governments and institutions to share power and their ability to accept and respect Aboriginal cultures in their difference. As prerequisites, these two dimensions provide insight into why dialogue in the context of negotiating Aboriginal concerns often results in two monologues or one sustained monologue that does not hear "the other". Conversely, a central premise of this dissertation is that respecting Aboriginal difference and sharing power in

the context of dialogue can lead to the ability on the part of non-Aboriginal policy-makers to engage in bicultural practices which more closely approximate the post-colonial ideal of co-existence. Although my own social location as a non-Aboriginal Canadian whose roots are European is very distinct, Turpel's statement of her own project as an Aboriginal person who is a lawyer, activist and theorist resonates with the third and ultimate purpose of this dissertation:

Out of the critique of the colonial relationship...I want to begin identifying new approaches which do not repeat the colonial attitudes of dominance and control over Aboriginal peoples but replace them with distinctly post-colonial relationships rooted in bi-cultural practices and understandings informed by both the experiences and values of Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal Canadians (n.d: 1).

In the context of the ongoing struggle between the colonial and the post-colonial, a number of "partnerships" between Aboriginal organizations and communities and various Canadian governments have emerged in recent years in the policy-making arena. Given the profound challenges involved in developing a new, meaningful relationship which begins to address the needs of Aboriginal peoples in a substantive way, an examination of constructive examples from practice can yield considerable insight into how new relations are constituted and what they look like in practice to the partners involved. In terms of actual case studies, the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy in Ontario is cited as an innovative example where successful dialogue on policy development led to implementation (Cameron & Wherrett 1995; RCAPd 1996).

The Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy, which was designed and developed between 1990 and 1994, combines a framework for dealing with the immediate and long-term measures related to family violence issues in Aboriginal communities through community-



designed and related programming with a framework to improve Aboriginal health status through providing equitable access to health care, culturally appropriate services, and support for Aboriginal-designed and delivered programs (AHWS 1997: p.4). In the community context, "healing" has come to mean recovery from the multiple impacts of colonization and changing the effects of colonization while "wellness" denotes arriving at a state of improved physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health (Maracle 1997). These two inter-related concepts provide an overall framework in the Strategy for addressing these social issues in a wholistic<sup>2</sup> and comprehensive manner (AHWS 1997: 4).

In the second part of this dissertation, I focus on the developmental process which led to the creation of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy. An analysis of the developmental process, which took place over a five year period, reveals insight into the dynamics which facilitate partnership and dialogue. As a rather unique example of effective partnership and constructive dialogue, this analysis has implications for broader Aboriginal-Canadian relations in terms of understanding the kinds of relations and transformations that can move us towards the post-colonial. Acceptance of Aboriginal difference and shared power are articulated as two such key dynamics. While not addressed explicitly in the analysis, several questions based on these two dynamics helped to guide my exploration and interpretation of the case study. These questions also provided a link in terms of connecting the case study to the larger macrocosm of Aboriginal-Canadian relations:

What forms did shared power take in terms of rebalancing hegemonic relations?

How did Aboriginal knowledge and values inform the construction of problems and solutions?

**What practices emerged as articulations of cultural appropriateness and biculturalism?**

As may be evident by now, I adopted a case study approach for this study because this approach can provide "a richness and depth to the description and analysis of micro events and larger social structures that constitute social life" (Orum et al 1991:5). The purposes of a case study, including the analysis of the relation among parts of a phenomenon and the analysis of the significance of a phenomenon for future events, also seemed to make it particularly relevant for this study (Reinharz 1992: 164).

### **Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis is divided into two primary sections. The socio-political context discussed in Part One provides the necessary theoretical background and conceptual frameworks for understanding the case study examined in Part Two.

Part One is divided into four chapters. In conceptual terms, the literature on Aboriginal-Canadian relations reveals two distinct philosophies, worldviews or visions operating in terms of those relations; namely, Aboriginal worldviews and liberalism. If each vision is viewed as its own paradigm, then one can expect to find within each paradigm, a shared set of interconnected premises which can help us to make sense of multiple social relations in terms of meaning as well as practices (Jenson 1989: 237-238).

In this period of negotiation, the hegemonic paradigm of liberalism has been called into question by Aboriginal peoples seeking redress from the twin dynamics of exclusion from and marginalization within Canadian society (Leonard 1994: 22). Aboriginal peoples now seek representation of their collective identities and interests on their own terms. Chapter One begins

with an articulation of some foundational principles of Aboriginal epistemology in order to better understand from within Aboriginal value systems, the Aboriginal vision of Aboriginal-Canadian relations variously defined by Aboriginal authors as co-existence or integrated autonomy (Dockstator 1993), and as self-rule and shared rule (RCAP 1996b: xxiii).

With the official rejection of assimilation as government policy in response to mass protest by Aboriginal peoples in the 1970s, the resulting muddle inside liberalism has helped to create a space for political discourse between the two worldviews. The assertion of Aboriginal difference based on Aboriginal worldviews poses significant challenges to the predominant Western<sup>3</sup> liberal worldview. How liberal and critical thinkers have taken up this challenge is explored through the literature in Chapter Two. Following a discussion of the philosophical limits of liberalism with respect to the incorporation of cultural difference, the two predominant non-Aboriginal frameworks used to conceptualize Aboriginal-Canadian relations in the literature, namely, ethnicity and internal colonialism, are examined.

The implications flowing from the preceding epistemological positions and philosophical dilemmas are discussed in Chapter Three. Specifically, postmodern positions are examined as an alternative to dominant liberal discourses. While both liberal and postmodern frameworks appear inadequate in terms of providing a framework which incorporates both a respect for cultural difference and shared power, an opening is suggested by combining elements of both perspectives. A set of ethics provides a potential framework for embracing co-existence as an emancipatory option. Constructed as discursive and social practices, this ethical framework provides a means for engaging in dialogue across difference in the policy-making context. To conclude Part One, Chapter Four provides an overview of the research design and methodology

used in this study. A collaborative research approach, in line with the values and ethics discussed in Chapters One and Three, is highlighted.

Part Two examines the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy (AHWS) as a case study of partnership and dialogue in policy-making involving relations between the government of Ontario and Aboriginal organizations in the province. Part Two unfolds in three chapters. Chapter Five presents an overview of AHWS as a case study. Based on the data collected, this chapter provides a detailed account of the origins and the developmental phases of two initiatives, the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy and the Aboriginal Health Policy, both of which were later combined to form the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy. As one telling of the AHWS story, Chapter Five provides a foundation for a more in-depth analysis and another telling of the story of the AHWS story in Chapter Seven. To arrive at a deeper analysis in Chapter Seven, I employ the Medicine Wheel as paradigmatic of Aboriginal ways of knowing. Chapter Six relates the process of learning I went through in order to come to greater understanding. Drawing on a particular teaching of the Medicine Wheel, the AHWS story unfolds once again in Chapter Seven. In contrast to the telling in Chapter Five which provides a detailed, chronological account of AHWS' development, the analysis provided in Chapter Seven is intended to focus on key dynamics of the deep structure of AHWS when viewed as a developmental process. Because AHWS is very much alive and now in its second five-year period of implementation, rather than draw conclusions as such, the dissertation ends with an epilogue. The epilogue draws together Parts One and Two, linking theory and practice in terms of an overall reflection on the work presented here.

## **Memory Comes Before Knowledge**

In a powerful and moving address, Chickasaw educator Dr. Eber Hampton (1996) reminds us of the importance of understanding why we are interested in studying the topics we choose to study:

For some reason I want to remind myself and other researchers and educators that there is a motive. Whatever we do in this life we do for a reason. I believe the reason is emotional, because we feel. We feel hungry, cold, afraid, brave, loving, hurt, hateful, empathetic, or any one of ten thousand unique human feelings. We do what we do for reasons, emotional reasons. That is the engine that drives us. That is the gift of the Creator of life. Life feels. We do our research, as abstract and intellectual as it may be, whether it's a computer simulation of the random reinforcement effect on two category concept identification or not, we do what do for reasons which are emotional. There is feeling connected to our intellect and we ignore, hide from, disguise, and suppress that feeling at our peril and the peril of the people around us. Emotionless, passionless, abstract, intellectual, academic research is a goddamn lie, it does not exist. It is a lie to ourselves and to other people. Humans, feeling, living, breathing, thinking humans do research. When we try to cut ourselves off at the neck and pretend to an objectivity that does not exist in the human world, we become very dangerous, to ourselves first, and then to people around us (p. 5-6).

In relating his own journey and that of students he has worked with, Hampton underscores the value of discovering and unwrapping the memories that serve as pathways to understanding and knowledge. In this regard, knowledge itself cannot be divorced from self-knowledge. This is a lesson that I have learned repeatedly on my own journey through this dissertation; memory does indeed come before knowledge. Among the several "memories" from my life experience that have drawn me into this dissertation, I will recount three seminal moments of "remembering" here.

The first memory is of an event that I have returned to continuously during the last six years and without which I likely would not have entered a doctoral program. It happened one

afternoon in the spring of 1993. As an MSW student, I had been doing a practicum with the Ontario government and in particular, had been working on the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy. A small group of us, from ministries and Aboriginal organizations, had been struggling for several months to come up with a framework to encompass a huge range of needs that Aboriginal people had identified in relation to issues of family violence. The problem that confronted us as a sub-committee was how to address this myriad in a comprehensive way. A common tendency when faced with such a multitude of problems is to group concerns together in like fashion and then prioritize. Working from the parts we arrive at the whole or at least we try to create more manageable pieces. Then we usually develop a rationale based on those priorities. However, the Aboriginal people involved in this initiative rejected the logic of prioritization; a logic which in effect creates a certain hierarchy that reduces issues, privileging some to the detriment of others. They insisted that all the needs identified by Aboriginal people throughout the province had to be dealt with. And therein lay the dilemma: how to accomplish this?

The breakthrough came one afternoon when the Aboriginal co-chair overheard our committee struggling and said to us, "that sounds like the Medicine Wheel". And she began to teach us then and there, beginning, of course, at the beginning which is creation and how

the Creator made a great circle as It needed a place for its thoughts. Everything created has a male and female spirit. The Creator gave the earth its own spirit, its own blood and created four beings, the four colours of the humanity. Each people was rendered its own path with its own instructions and responsibilities, its own culture and communication with the Creator, its own belief systems and means of survival as a community. The Creator gave gifts in sets of four to be helpers, the four directions, the four elements, the four seasons, four grandmothers and four grandfathers. Four more gifts were given: kindness, honesty, sharing and strength.<sup>4</sup>

And in this way she taught us the Medicine Wheel, medicine being that which is good for

us, that which enables us as human beings to live a good life. All cultures and peoples have their philosophy of what constitutes the "good life". This is the Aboriginal way. That day, she also shared with us the teachings of the life cycle, the responsibilities and gifts which attend each phase of life as children, youth, adults and elders. As a result of these teachings, we were able to develop a comprehensive framework that addressed the wide range of needs identified. Based on the Medicine Wheel, the framework we developed became known simply as the "Healing Continuum".

This dissertation unfolds in a particular way from that event and my subsequent memories of it. At the time, I was aware that something very powerful had happened. My bodily memory of the event was a deeply felt sense of having reached the limits of Western rationality and of being taken into a different way of thinking/being. I recall the sensation of experiencing the enormous gap between the two worlds and simultaneously, the bridging of the two in the movement from one worldview to the other. Subsequently, in trying to make sense of this experience, the only word that had any meaning for me was "liminality" - I had reached a certain edge or limen that I did not understand.

In my search for understanding, this experience drew me into the world of epistemology and different ways of knowing. Thus, that event and its memory shapes this dissertation in a very fundamental way. It meant that I could not deal with the development of AHWS from within a conventional Western framework of policy analysis. It meant that I would have to reach deeper into the nature of Western thought, Aboriginal thought and everything in between. Ultimately, it led me back to the Medicine Wheel as a locus of learning and understanding. Thus, this dissertation is necessarily framed within an epistemological orientation.

The second memory that I recognize as part of my search for knowledge came in the form of a dream one night after I had collected the data for this study and was in the process of writing the report for the organizations and communities connected to AHWS. The dream enacted the history of Aboriginal peoples on this continent from the beginning of time and creation, through colonization to the present. After being shown this, the Native guide in the dream turned to me and said, "Tell the story of colonization."

This message helped me to understand that part of my role as a non-Aboriginal Canadian was to help bring that story to light. While this dissertation does not tell that story as such, colonization remains a thread that is woven throughout this dissertation. The story of AHWS, issues of co-existence, and the need for healing between Aboriginal peoples and the rest of Canada and within Aboriginal communities make no sense without a full comprehension of colonization and its impacts as part of our shared story. And yet the dream itself gave me a very different perspective on that story. I came to understand that while colonization was a profoundly devastating and destructive moment in lived reality, as told from Aboriginal perspectives it was also encapsulated within a much longer, broader, and richer story of Aboriginal life and existence on this continent. Colonization was not the whole story; nor was it the end of the story. Reading the first volume of the final report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples several months later solidified this understanding for me. That volume eloquently begins to tell the story of Aboriginal peoples on this continent - from Aboriginal perspectives. The dream and its effects helped me to see AHWS in perspective as one manifestation of a deep current running underneath present events and happenings and as part of a movement within Aboriginal reality striving beyond survival towards a full and complete realization of Aboriginal being. That was



my understanding at the time and it shaped the theoretical perspective I bring to this dissertation. The message of the dream, however, was to return to me in a profoundly personal way in a third moment of remembering.

It began one night during this past year in a phone conversation with my sister. I had been sharing the work I was doing on this dissertation and as a teacher, she was very interested in what I was learning. The conversation turned to our family history and she reminded me about some documents an uncle had given my mother a few years ago about her ancestors' history in Canada and an inheritance my grandfather had claimed as a result. My father had made copies for each of us but I had tucked them away in a file somewhere without reading them. It was then that my sister told me that our first ancestors had arrived in Canada from France in the mid-1600s. I became very still at that moment and I could feel a connection without knowing what it was. In following this up, I subsequently learned that my ancestors had been involved in the founding of present-day Montreal and had been given substantial land grants by the governor of New France as a reward for their direct participation in the conquest of Aboriginal territory and communities.

This news tore me apart. Colonization and its effects were no longer something I had the luxury of being emotionally distant from as a non-Aboriginal Canadian. While the dissertation was quite advanced at this point, ironically much of what I had learned by then came into much sharper focus as a result of this personal connection to the events and issues I was studying. I now understood in my heart why I was so preoccupied with colonization. Steeped in religious fervour, the racist and degrading language contained in the documents wreaked of the ethnocentricity that drives so much systemic human suffering past and present. The pain of this knowledge helped me to confront the subtlety of my own ethnocentricity and to acknowledge

how limited my understanding was and is.

While I had always felt that my experience with AHWS had been one of those singularly, unique gifts in my life, I now saw that it was no mere accident of fate that I had become involved in a strategy promoting healing on many levels. Colonization is the reason why healing is necessary. Being implicated through my family history meant having to face the issue in a personal way and deal with the guilt and shame I felt. Thus, the most difficult part of this work for me personally was and is coming to terms with being the colonizer. The Medicine Wheel teaches that balance and harmony arrives through healing on physical, mental, emotional and spiritual levels. Working through my feelings on a spiritual level has helped me to accept that while I will always be the colonizer, I can choose to act in a manner different than my ancestors did. How I choose to act depends on my understanding. Working on this dissertation has helped me to understand Hampton's words that "knowing" apart from relatedness to ourselves and others is profoundly dangerous and that any true knowledge comes in and through relationship.

Mark Dockstator (1993) has also helped me to understand this. In his analysis, the point of contact to the present constitutes one cycle of time in terms of Aboriginal-European relations. At the beginning of a second cycle, we are returned again to a time of negotiating the kind of relationship we as peoples will forge together. With the hindsight of history comes another opportunity to understand each other and this time around to create a different kind of relationship for the coming seven generations of both Aboriginal and immigrant peoples in Canada.

## ENDNOTES

1. There are currently a number of terms in the literature and common usage which describe the original inhabitants of contemporary nation-states and their descendants: Indigenous peoples, Native peoples, Aboriginal peoples, First Nations, First Peoples, and Indian. As Davis (1993) notes, the choice of term varies from context to context, "reflecting not only changes in language usage by aboriginal people and mainstream Canadian society over time, but also important political connotations (p.17).

In this thesis, I use the term "Aboriginal peoples" primarily and for the following reasons: It is the most inclusive term currently used in Canada to refer collectively to the original inhabitants of this country and their descendants; it incorporates the legal status of Indian, Metis, Inuit, and by implication, non-status Indians (Dockstator 1993: 175); and lastly, following Dockstator (1993), the use of the term "Aboriginal" makes it possible to distinguish between the legal definition of the term "Indian", as applied in the Indian Act for example, from the broader contextual meaning contained in Aboriginal traditional teachings and languages which "refers to the original inhabitants of the land as a concept, not as a term capable of precise definition...the concept refers to all original inhabitants, regardless of geographic location and is therefore, international in both scope and application" (p. 174-175). Regarding this last point, however, I use the terms "Indigenous peoples" or "First Peoples" when speaking generally of the original inhabitants beyond Canadian borders or in an international context.

"First Nations" is a more recent term introduced in the context of the struggle for self-government in Canada and thus, has strategic importance (Davis 1993: 17). However, the term is not used everywhere in Canada and depending on the context, may or may not include some Aboriginal peoples. The term "Indian" is a defined category in Canadian law; that is, those Aboriginal peoples to whom the Indian Act applies. While some Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people continue to use the term comfortably, for me it carries derogatory connotations associated with the colonial misrepresentations of Aboriginal peoples which I do not want to repeat. When known, I prefer to use the cultural affiliation with which a group or an individual self-identifies e.g. Anishnawbe (Ojibwa).

2. The spelling of this term reflects a decision of the Joint Steering Committee of AHWS to emphasize the "whole" rather than the "hole".

3. The term "Western" in my use throughout this dissertation refers to Western philosophy as emanating from the non-Communist countries of Europe and the Americas. I use the term to distinguish Western thought from Eastern thought and Indigenous or Aboriginal worldviews and I do so with reference to the dominant discourses in Western philosophy that emanated from the Enlightenment.

4. I have paraphrased the words of this teaching from the actual text we included in the Final Report, *From Generations to Come: The Time is Now. A Strategy for Aboriginal Family Healing*, p. 16-17.

## **PART ONE: The Socio-Political Context**

### **Introduction**

Contextual issues are often conceived as those immediate circumstances surrounding a situation or event. Context can also be interpreted as those elements necessary and appropriate for creating an interwoven structure. For the purpose of this dissertation I generally adopt the latter meaning; the contextual issues and perspectives discussed in Part One are integral to the analysis and to illuminating the significance of the case study in Part Two. Aboriginal-Canadian relations can and should be understood in their specificity as a unique set of historically constituted relations unparalleled in Canadian society. In order to understand and interpret those relations at a given point in time, I believe it is important to understand "where people are coming from". Given the complexity of the issues and the ongoing tensions in this current period of negotiation, it is important to understand the philosophical underpinnings and epistemological assumptions which ground the differing Aboriginal and liberal visions of Aboriginal-Canadian relations. Implicit in both visions are different conceptual frameworks or logics flowing from different cultural assumptions based on different philosophies and values. A major assumption in this dissertation is that epistemology plays a direct role in policy-making when the partners in dialogue are from two distinct cultures; in effect, partnership becomes an expression of cross-cultural dialogue.

A second major assumption concerns the history and the nature of the Aboriginal-Canadian "partnership"; only in the recent period and under great pressure from a revitalized Aboriginal leadership has the Canadian government seen fit to recognize and enter into dialogue with Aboriginal peoples. Relations of oppression and domination are part of the legacy of

colonialism in Canada. The warranted distrust of the Canadian State by Aboriginal peoples continues to mark current attempts at dialogue. Part One informs the overall discussion by making explicit the issues and tensions when these two worlds meet at the policy table on the terrain of cultural difference and hegemonic power relations.

One reason cited in the literature for the lack of dialogue or failed dialogue in terms of policy-making with respect to Aboriginal-Canadian relations concerns the problem of language. Lack of precision or opaqueness can mask views and the paradigms operating underneath; the meanings attached to key terms remain undefined or vague (RCAP 1996a: 338). Common examples include the terms "self-government" and "sovereignty".<sup>1</sup> In other cases, the same words continue to be used but their meanings have shifted over time (RCAP 1996a: 339). The problem of language has deeper roots, however. West (1995) points out that the very language of self-determination and self-government is based on "English-speaking justice" which creates an epistemological dependency and reinforces hegemonic relations through discourse. It also serves to exclude Aboriginal epistemology which is central to understanding Aboriginal worldviews.

In Chapter One I will explore the Aboriginal vision of Aboriginal-Canadian relations variously defined by Aboriginal authors as co-existence or integrated autonomy (Dockstator 1993), and as self-rule and shared rule (RCAP, 1996b: xxiii). An examination of this vision by means of including Aboriginal epistemology uncovers not only a unique understanding rarely addressed by non-Aboriginal analysts of Aboriginal-Canadian relations, it also provides a basis for understanding from Aboriginal perspectives why negotiations fail before they even reach the table (RCAP 1996a: 6). The implications of such exclusions will also be discussed.

In dealing with Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives as a non-Aboriginal knower, I

heed Pierson's caution to proceed with "epistemic humility" and "methodological caution"(1991: 94). To this end, this chapter contains a number of direct quotes and diagrams by Aboriginal authors on the view that what is said, how what is said and who is doing the speaking are equally important to comprehension and to avoiding misinterpretation and appropriation.

From non-Aboriginal perspectives, Weaver points out that the "self-defining demands of aboriginal minorities pose unique problems for Western liberal democracies" (1984: 183). For example, Fleras and Elliott observe that competing definitions of equality create confusion and ambiguity in terms of Aboriginal policy (1992b: 51). These challenges to the status quo posed by Aboriginal claims strike at the heart of liberalism, as the determining approach to democracy in Canada. In the context of a broader politics of recognition affecting Western democracies, Aboriginal inclusion on Aboriginal terms has caused some Western philosophers to re-examine liberalism in light of articulations of cultural pluralism contained within. Given the principle of equal representation of all, "what does it mean for citizens with different cultural identities, often based on ethnicity, race, gender, or religion to recognize ourselves as equals in the way we are treated in politics?" (Gutmann 1994: 3). A series of positions, responses, and alternatives by Western thinkers applied to the question of recognizing Aboriginal difference will be examined in the first part of Chapter Two. The second part of that chapter then reviews the two predominant Western frameworks used by non-Aboriginal writers to conceptualize Aboriginal-Canadian relations, namely, ethnicity and internal colonialism.

Chapter Three discusses the implications of the different epistemological and theoretical frameworks presented in Chapters One and Two which are used to understand and interpret Aboriginal-Canadian relations in the literature.

**In concluding this first part of the dissertation, Chapter Four provides an overview of the context for research with Aboriginal peoples and discusses the ethical principles and participatory process which informed the design and methodology used in this study.**

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Aboriginal Visions**

...Before contact with the Europeans had ever taken place, it was prophesied that a great healing would take place, starting with the heart of the turtle, which is the Hopi people in Arizona. The prophecy said, "A huge wave of white people will come and with their coming the native spirit will be wiped out to almost nothing, but when it hits its lowest point the Indian spirit would start to rise up again and out of this new rising would come not only strong brown Indians but white Indians. The beginning of this new rising would be signified by the eagle landing on the moon." In 1969, when the first spacecraft landed on the moon, the first words were "the Eagle has landed". This coincided with a number of other social and political events that started the unchaining of native spirit (George 1991:167-168).

#### **Introduction**

This prophecy and others like it <sup>2</sup> which abound in the Aboriginal world represent a legitimate form of knowledge which serves to interpret and make meaning out of events. The content of this particular prophecy relates to the outcome of several hundred years of Aboriginal-Canadian relations. It encapsulates the story of colonization within a story of healing and "the unchaining of native spirit". In this chapter, I will review Aboriginal visions for Aboriginal-Canadian relations from Aboriginal perspectives. In many respects, understanding Aboriginal visions or perspectives on Aboriginal-Canadian relations means exploring the content of Aboriginal difference in relation to Western paradigms. As will become evident, such visions and perspectives are not derived from Western conceptions of knowledge but rather are grounded in Aboriginal epistemology. Like the Western world, the Aboriginal world is not a homogenous whole but rather comprises many, richly diverse nations and cultures. In this dissertation my use of the term "epistemology" in the singular refers to basic concepts and principles which appear to



be consistent across a diversity of epistemologies in both the Western and Aboriginal worlds. Following an opening statement by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples with respect to the Aboriginal vision for Aboriginal-Canadians relations, principles and values fundamental to Aboriginal worldviews will be examined. This review of key concepts within Aboriginal epistemology will place us in a better position to understand a particular articulation of the Aboriginal vision for Aboriginal-Canadian relations in the work of Dockstator (1993). The challenges which Aboriginal peoples experience in seeking recognition of their visions and knowledge systems in the context of Western dominance concludes this chapter.

### **Co-existence**

In the preamble to the first volume of the Final Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996b), the commissioners outline the terms on which "a new relationship" between Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian state can be constituted. The Commission defines its approach as extending beyond policies and changes which better the life conditions of Aboriginal people towards more fundamental change in those relations (RCAP 1996b: xxiii). Their first assertion is that it is "a matter of enlightened Canadian self-interest" in addition to Aboriginal interests, to recognize and preserve the distinct cultures of Aboriginal peoples "with their unique knowledge and understandings of the world" on the principle that "cultural diversity is of critical importance for the survival of humanity" (RCAP 1996b: xxiii). A second assertion follows immediately:

Justice demands, moreover, that the terms of the original agreements under which some Aboriginal peoples agreed to become part of Canada be upheld. Promises ought to be kept...Solemn commitments ought to be honoured (RCAP 1996b: xxiii).

The prerequisites for a just relationship, the recognition of cultural diversity and the honouring of original agreements, provide the basis for an equal and secure relationship (RCAP 1996b: xxiv).

On the basis of this understanding, the Commission then defines the Aboriginal vision with respect to Canada:

Aboriginal peoples anticipate and desire a process for continuing the historical work of Confederation. Their goal is not to undo the Canadian federation: their goal is to complete it. It is well known that the Aboriginal peoples in whose ancient homelands Canada was created have not had the opportunity to participate in creating Canada's federal union; they now seek a just accommodation within it. The goal is the realization for everyone in Canada of the principles upon which the constitution and the treaties both rest, that is, a genuinely participatory and democratic society made up of peoples who have chosen freely to confederate (RCAP 1996b: xxiv).

This highly synthetic statement both clarifies and raises fundamental issues for Aboriginal-

Canadian relations; issues which in my view, speak directly to the present paradigm muddle.

Aboriginal sovereignty is understood as completing, not separating from, confederation. If not as separate nation-states, how then is Aboriginal sovereignty to be understood? Aboriginal consent to participation rests on principles which define a genuinely participatory and democratic society as envisioned in the Canadian constitution and the treaties. There is an implied challenge to liberal democracy here. How are these principles understood within Aboriginal frameworks and what is the challenge that is implied? Regarding the latter, the Royal Commission states:

The legitimate claims of Aboriginal peoples challenges Canada's sense of justice and its capacity to accommodate both multinational citizenship and universal respect for human rights. More effective Aboriginal participation in Canadian institutions should be supplemented by legitimate Aboriginal institutions, thus combining self-rule and shared rule. The Commission's proposals are not concerned with multicultural policy but with a vision of a just multinational federation that recognizes its historical foundations and values its historical nations as an integral part of the Canadian identity and the Canadian political fabric (RCAP 1996b: xxiv).

What does "combining self-rule and shared rule" within "a just multinational federation" mean in Aboriginal terms? Each of these questions surfaces in the literature in different ways and will be discussed throughout this dissertation.

While there are many Aboriginal perspectives on these questions and no singular response, in terms of theoretical perspectives, Aboriginal authors tend to rely on core values, principles and concepts which emanate from Aboriginal epistemology or their traditional knowledge to explain and to distinguish their positions from those of Western or Euro-Canadian thinkers.

### **Epistemological Principles**

In this dissertation, I use the terms "Aboriginal thought", "Aboriginal epistemology", "traditional knowledge" interchangeably to refer to the knowledge systems of Indigenous peoples in North America. While Aboriginal peoples rightfully insist on the multiplicity of their cultures, traditions, and nations, they also acknowledge that one can speak of "tribal philosophy" or "traditional knowledge" in a general sense. In my view, they do so without being essentialist or adopting positions of cultural relativism. To identify common patterns or similar values and symbols is not intended to reduce knowledge but rather to seek to understand it better. Cajete, in his seminal work on Indigenous education, states that

Whether one views traditional Iroquois, Sioux, Pueblo, Navajo, or Huichol ways of knowing and learning, the pattern is the same: unity through diversity. Indian people are all related. Tribal ways reflect a natural diversity of expression of basic principles and foundations. Regardless of Tribal culture, Indians of the Americas share common metaphors of Indigenous knowledge and education (1994: 35).

Similarly, Dumont, in his study of an Aboriginal paradigm of values which compares Ojibwa

teachings with those of four other major Aboriginal cultures in North America, adds

An underlying premise...is the basic assumption that there is a degree to which certain key Aboriginal values can be universalized to be representative of most Aboriginal cultures in North America. Another assumption is these values that are most representative of Aboriginal people are sufficiently resistant to acculturation so as to persist over time and through various assimilative forces that have been at work since the time of contact (i.e. about 500 years) (1993: 44).

The prophecy quoted at the beginning of this chapter provides an entry point for understanding a first principle of Aboriginal thought: Aboriginal epistemology, defined as both the content of knowledge and ways of knowing, is cosmological (Boldt and Long 1985; RCAP 1996b: 86). Cosmology refers to the origin and structure of the universe. The horizon of Aboriginal thought is that of the cosmos or the whole of creation, which in Aboriginal terms is understood to be the gift of the Creator. As such, Aboriginal epistemology is constructed as sacred discourse (Holmes 1996: 337). In the first comprehensive history of Aboriginal peoples in Canada written by an Aboriginal scholar, Dickason distinguishes Aboriginal and Judeo-Christian cosmologies:

...This dazzling variety of cultural particularities has tended to obscure the underlying unity of the Amerindian world view, which saw humans as part of a cosmological order depending on a balance of reciprocating forces to keep the universe functioning in harmony. This contrasts with Judeo-Christian view of a cosmos dominated by a God in the image of man (sic). In this perspective man is in a privileged position, as up to a certain point he can control nature for his benefit (1992: 13).

Aboriginal cosmology and sacred discourse stand in contrast to Western homocentricity and the Enlightenment conception of rationalism where reason itself is the privileged discourse in a human-centred world. Sacred discourse exists in the Western world. However, following the Enlightenment and its rejection of a theocentric worldview in favour of rationalism and a secular worldview, that discourse no longer retains a privileged position in the West.

The Western separation of the physical world from the metaphysical world through mental activity divorced from the spiritual is a persistent theme in the Aboriginal literature. Ermine (1995) contrasts the Western objective search for knowledge in the external world with the Aboriginal concern for the metaphysical in the inner world through subjective introspection. Following Bohm, the former has led to 'a fragmentary self-world view' and a "vicious circle of atomistic thinking that restricts the capacity for holism" (1995: 103). In contrast, referring to the Cree term *mamatowisowin*, the inner journey leads to a capacity to tap into vast energy as a creative force "by use of all the faculties that constitute our being":

This energy manifests itself in all existence because all of life is connected, and all of life is primarily connected and with and accessed through the life force...The Old Ones had experienced totality, a wholeness, in inwardness, and effectively created a physical manifestation of the life force by creating community. In doing so, they empowered the people to become the 'culture' of accumulated knowledge (Ermine 1995: 104-105).

Metis psychologist, Joe Couture in his work with contemporary Elders affirms that "true Elders are familiar with Energy on a vast scale, in multiple modes, e.g., energy as healing, creative, life-giving, sustaining" (1996: 48). Ermine cautions Aboriginal people "to be wary of Western conventions that deny the practice of inwardness and fortitude to achieve transformative holism" (1995: 103).

Holism, understood as the interconnectedness and relatedness of all things, constitutes a rejection of hierarchy in favour of equality. Human beings in Aboriginal thought constitute part of the cosmos but are not the centre of it; the intent is to live in harmony or balance with the cosmos - not to master, dominate or control it. Thus, ontologically, Aboriginal being is situated in an equal relation with all other beings. Differentiation and equality mark the relations between all forms of life, animate and inanimate. Western ethnocentrism has marked such relations

(humans as part of nature) as "primitive", "savage", "inferior", devoid of culture and morality. Yet as Couture observes, there is a strong, moral and spiritual vision at the heart of traditional knowledge: "There are only two things you have to know about being Indian. One is that everything is alive, and two is that we're all related" (anonymous, cited in Couture 1996: 45).

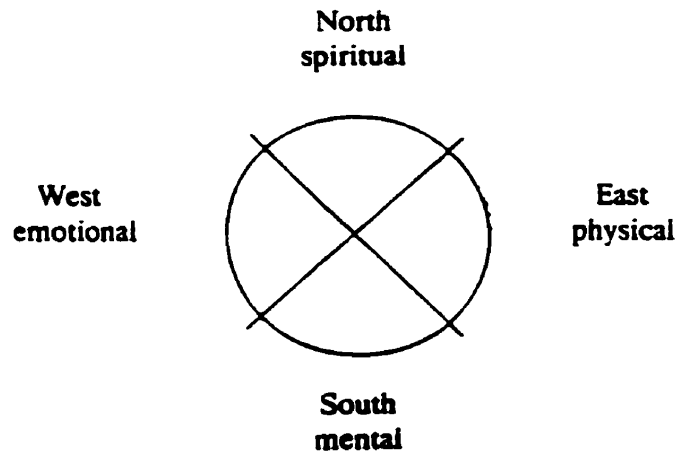
Cajete expands on the concept "we are all related":

Plants, animals, the earth, and all those forces of Nature that surround us are part of us. Only through understanding those forces can we truly be human, because humans not only live in relationship to the natural world; we are the natural world (1994: 80).

Cajete contrasts this notion of a natural democracy within the cosmos with the Western paradigm of modern technology derived from Newtonian-Cartesian notions. From his perspective, the latter paradigm does not serve life because it does not allow for "a sustainable and direct relation to the earth or realize our primal relationship to it" (1994: 80). The Aboriginal concept of holism entails a respect for diversity not homogenization. Just as bio-diversity is essential for the maintenance of life, as noted earlier, Aboriginal authors point to the necessity of cultural diversity for human survival (RCAP 1996b: xxiii; Cajete 1994: 80).

The Medicine Wheel is a central paradigm which expresses the logic of holism for many Aboriginal cultures in North America. Constructed as a circle, divided into four parts by directional arrows, it is "the universal symbol that all indigenous peoples recognize and understand immediately" (Lyons 1984: 7-8). The circle itself symbolizes the non-linear conceptions of time and space of the Aboriginal world. Further, George states that the Medicine Wheel, also known as the Circle of Life, "is fashioned after the world itself, being balanced by the four directions, the four races, and the four human characteristics" (1991: 162).

## **The Medicine Wheel**



Medicine Wheels vary from culture to culture and are used to convey teachings on multiple levels of consciousness, applied to many subjects. However, Medicine Wheel thinking as an expression of Aboriginal epistemology always embodies the central principles of differentiation and relatedness within a cosmology of wholeness. As a symbolic representation of paths to knowledge, it speaks to "the progressive growth of self through a cyclical journey of repetition, experience, and construction of meaning" (Ermine 1995: 106). As such, it provides for a way of coming to knowledge which is dynamic and allows for adjusting to changing conditions in response to altered environments (Castellano: in press). Castellano relates an example of her coming-to-knowledge which simultaneously reveals the transformative nature of learning through the strong connection between the knower and the known object in Aboriginal epistemology:

When I first learned about the medicine wheel I found it easy to see how the life stages of the human being corresponded to the quadrants - child, youth, adult and elder. I found it more difficult to accept that diverse colours of humankind belonged in the quadrants as well. It seemed to say red people had a gift of relating to the natural world and animals, white people were inclined to movement and intellectual activity, black people have the gift of vision and yellow people have a gift of time or patience, was contributing to stereotypes.

Gradually I became aware that my resistance to the symbolic representation arose in part from my awareness that if people were divided up according to their gifts I would probably be placed in the white quadrant because I work so easily with words and concepts. Aboriginal teaching that threatened to alienate me from my roots and my community was not welcomed! At some point an Elder elaborated on the flags at the ends of the intersecting lines. They signify the winds that blow and move the wheel, reminding us that nothing is fixed and stagnant, that change is a natural condition of life. I remembered that learning and growth in each of the quadrants had precedence in various stages of my life.

It dawned on me then that the medicine wheel is not a model of rigid categorization or racial division; it is a model of balance. Some of us find ourselves predominantly in one quadrant of the wheel, with gifts that by themselves are insufficient for a full life. We are drawn by the teaching to find ways of incorporating the gifts of the other quadrants, by seeking more balance in our lives... So the model of the world is not of people separated in quadrants but united in a circle, creating balance in individual lives and in society by sharing diverse gifts.

The holistic quality of knowledge implies that isolating pieces of experience and trying to make sense of them apart from the environment that gave rise to them flies in the face of reality and is bound to lead to frustration. This does not mean that analysis of parts of the circle of life is dismissed; it simply means that analysis must be balanced by synthesis - placing the part which we have come to know by close analysis in the contexts of all its relations, who will continually impact on that which we thought we knew, transforming it (in press).

Learning in an Aboriginal frame of reference is not a series of abstractions but rather, as Castellano recounts, takes place "in the contexts of all its relations", "not apart from the environment which gave rise to (it)"; others such as elders assist that process while the learning remains centred in the learner. This way of learning/teaching is constitutive of an oral tradition immersed in communal experience, the objective of which is to learn "to be a human, one of the People" (Cajete 1994:41). While the process of learning is quintessentially relational, "the essence of traditional teachings, as steeped in oral tradition, recognizes that each individual is different" (Dockstator 1993: 179). Thus, individuals are encouraged to experience, assess, and discover their own interpretations of teachings and stories (Dockstator 1993: 179). In contrast to



predominant Western norms, truth in Aboriginal thought is internally defined and subjective:

A fundamental difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal societies is the way truth is located. Truth in non-Aboriginal terms is located outside of the self...discovered only through years of studies in institutions...In the Aboriginal way, truth is internal to the self. The Creator put each and every one of us here in a complete state of being with our own set of instructions to follow. Truth is discovered through personal examination...In the Ojibwe language truth is "niwii-debwe"...(which) more fully means "what is right as I know it" ...The instructions we receive through institutionalized education indicate that we must locate truth and knowledge outside of ourselves. Introspection is not a proper research method. It is improper to footnote the knowledge that my grandmother told me. These two understandings of truth are, perhaps, diametrically opposed...My experience is one of negotiating the contradictions...(Monture-Angus 1995: 217-219).

While it is personal truth that is sought, the content of that knowledge is about relationship and responsibility in relation to being human. It is "embodied" knowledge in the sense that it is transmitted primarily through people in an oral tradition of memory and narrative ("knowledge my grandmother told me"). Thus, Aboriginal epistemology is highly relational: it is knowledge about relationships and knowledge transmitted through relationships in the context of the whole of the created world. In this sense, knowledge is not abstracted from social relations and lived experience but rather is directly related to a collectivity of human beings.

### **Social Relations**

As noted above, Aboriginal people refer to the original instructions or the original agreement from the Creator to understand their proper relation to the self, to their own community, to other peoples and to the world. In contrast to rights-based concepts in Western law, the original instructions invoke the central notion of responsibility:

We human beings, however, have been given an added responsibility. We have been given an intellect - that is, the ability to decide for ourselves whether we will do a thing this way or that way. The human being has been given the gift to make choices, and he

(sic) has been given guidelines, or what we call original instructions. This does not represent an advantage for the human being but rather a responsibility. All the four colours of mankind received those original instructions, but somewhere in time, in many places, they have been lost. It is a credit to us native people that we have retained those instructions. Many non-Indians have tried to destroy the original instructions because they view them as detrimental to progress (Lyons 1984:6).

In contrast with Western homocentricity, additional human responsibility does not invoke hierarchy, privilege, or entitlements which would threaten natural democracy by creating disharmony and imbalance. As a system of social relations based on kinship, Aboriginal societies give primacy to the whole or the collective over the individual. Lyons explains "the collective" in terms of the Medicine Wheel:

...The centre of that circle is the family, and at the heart of it is the woman. Just as Mother Earth is the core of life, so the woman as mother is the core of her family. The family sits in a circle, and that circle is called the clan. The clans in turn also sit in a circle, and that circle is called a nation. Then these nations sit in a circle, and that is called the world. Finally, there is the universe, which is the largest of the circles (1984:8).

In the context of a cosmological worldview wherein all earth creatures are interdependent and must be respected in their natural equality, natural law governs. Following a discussion which contrasts communism and capitalism with Indigenous worldviews, Lyons situates natural law and its meaning in the context of Aboriginal ontology:

We Indians are in the spiritual centre of the world. We must hold on to what we have because we have 'the natural law'. The one thing you want to understand about nature and its law is that there is no place for mercy, no compromising. It is absolute. If you don't wear enough clothes when you go hunting, you will freeze to death. The natural law prevails, regardless of what any international tribunal may decide...We are all bound by this law. There is no way that you can violate this law and get away with it...That is why it is important to understand that when a government develops laws to rule the people, it must develop those laws in accordance with the natural law; otherwise the laws will fail. But the two great political powers on this earth are acting, in many cases, in direct conflict with the natural law. It is an amazingly egocentric and short-sighted attitude (1984: 7).

William Henderson contrasts natural law with positivist law, the tradition which predominates in Canada. He states that the positivist is not concerned with whether a law is good or bad, moral or just, but rather with the formality of whether or not it is a law:

The difference between the positivist school and the natural law school is illustrated by the traditional Iroquois belief that the world is an island resting on the back of the turtle. The positivist will never look beneath the turtle to see what the turtle is standing on; the natural lawyer is interested in little else (1985: 223).

Tribal will, custom, and tradition are intended to regulate face-to-face relations for the common good (Boldt and Long 1985: 168-9). For example, the welfare of next seven generations is the yardstick by which decisions affecting nature and society should be thought through and measured (Lyons 1984: 8). This stands in contrast to Western time which in terms of knowledge related to planning and decision-making tends at best to run in four or five year cycles based on terms of governments; from Aboriginal perspectives, this is viewed as very short-sighted and often detrimental for human and natural relations (Lyons 1984; Brascoupe 1996). Thus, notions of responsible governance contain different meanings and practices in Aboriginal collectivities than those of the Western nation-state. Monture-Angus offers an explanation of collective rights from an Aboriginal understanding of responsibility:

The way I am using the concept of responsibility is unique to First Nations way of ordering the world. It can be juxtaposed to the rights philosophy on which Euro-Canadian systems of law are based. The focus of First Nations society is not based solely on individual rights but also on collective rights. Collective rights are greater than groups of individual rights. In my understanding of First Nations ways, both individual and collective rights are of utmost importance. They must be understood together. Responsibility as a basis for the structure of a culturally based discourse focuses attention not on what is mine, but on the relationships between people and creation (that is both the individual and the collective)...Obligations and duties are rights-based words and do not hold the same meaning that I give to responsibilities (1995: 28).

Thus, the idea of group or collective rights does not imply any lack of disrespect or concern for

the individual. Ermine notes the paradox which seemingly exists: "In no other place did the individual have more integrity or receive more honour than in the Aboriginal community" (1995: 108). Socially, individuals are responsible for partaking in decision-making determined by consensus of the whole. In this context, power or empowerment can be equated with self-determination of the individual *and* the community; it is relational, balanced and complementary rather than dichotomous or hierarchical (Stevenson, cited in Monture-Angus 1995:224).

**Ironically, Aboriginal social relations influenced liberal thought. Boldt and Long comment that**

**It is a matter of historical record that the enlightenment *philosophes* were influenced, if not inspired, by the North American Indians' practice of freedom of individual choice (liberty), denial of status differentials (equality), and rule by consensus (fraternity). Tribal communities conceived of social justice not as an abstract ideal or charter myth but in terms of actual social practice (1985: 170).**

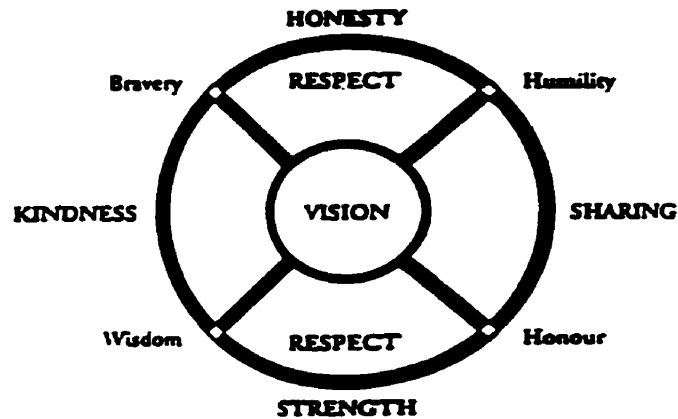
**Monture-Angus articulates the principles which enable and enact reciprocity and harmony in social relations through the fulfilment of responsibilities:**

**There are four guiding principles which illuminate the way in which we are expected to respect these traditional gifts and responsibilities. These guiding principles are kindness, sharing, truth (or respect) and strength. These principles are different aspects of the same whole (or circle). When you are kind the kindness is returned to you. When you share you reap the benefits of what you share. Perhaps you share a teaching and in this way the teachings are kept alive. Sometimes the truth is hard, but it may be the only way that we will learn. These three responsibilities - kindness, sharing, and truth - will lead to the fourth, which is strength. One principle cannot exist without the other three. There is no changing them (1995:31).**

**Dumont (1993) in his study of these and other principle values in relation to the Ojibwa tradition states:**

**Vision is wholeness; it recognizes the interconnectedness of all things and the totality of its interrelatedness. Because of this vision generates respect. Respect conditions all other values, thus engendering a unique value system with a unique interpretation... Values such as wisdom, honesty, humility, kindness and strength, may be claimed by other peoples and cultures. However, what makes for the uniqueness of Aboriginal values is the perception and understanding of these values because of the primal gift of**

vision/wholeness and the primary motivator, respect (1993: 54).



The meaning given to these values, embedded as they are in culturally specific contexts, cannot be abstracted from one set of social relations in the Aboriginal world and transplanted into a different cultural and social context in the Western world without losing that meaning and the vision from which meaning emanates. In contrasting some of the principal values and behaviours of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, Dumont (1993) articulates a "zone of conflict" in moving from the traditional to the modern context:

It becomes much more apparent that persons operating from their own cultural position, being motivated by their value expressions, will come into conflict with one another in situations where they must relate to each other in achieving common ends (p. 61).

This brief delineation of some key concepts in Aboriginal epistemology as articulated primarily by Aboriginal scholars reveals numerous tensions in relation to the dominant discourses that inform modern Western thought. However, as a non-Aboriginal person, I am aware that this delineation is very limited. Aboriginal writers caution against simplistic interpretations of their knowledge and value systems which in essence must be lived and shared

through the experience of Aboriginal life to be understood (Dockstator 1993; Monture-Angus 1995). In terms of the dominant discourses in modern Western thought, I express the tension between the two contrasting epistemologies and value systems as binaries: cosmology/homocentricity, spirit/reason, nature/culture, whole/parts, collective/individual, responsibilities/rights. I view these binaries as the oppositions of a Western rationalism and the impositions of a colonial mind. However, from the Aboriginal perspective of wholism wherein relatedness is contained within differentiation, I see that humans and nature have a place in the cosmos; that in the process of knowing reason has a place alongside spirit, body, and emotions; that culture can emanate from nature; that parts are as intrinsically important to the whole as are individuals to the collective; and that rights emanate from responsibility. In terms of relations, binaries oppose and exclude while holisms differentiate and include. Inclusive relations respect difference, whether that difference is Aboriginal or Western.

### **Aboriginal-Canadian Relations**

Having reviewed some key concepts and principles of Aboriginal epistemology evident in the literature, we are now in a better position to comprehend current Aboriginal visions and desires with respect to Aboriginal-Canadian relations, referred to earlier as "combining self-rule and shared rule" (RCAP 1996: Vol. 1, xxiv).

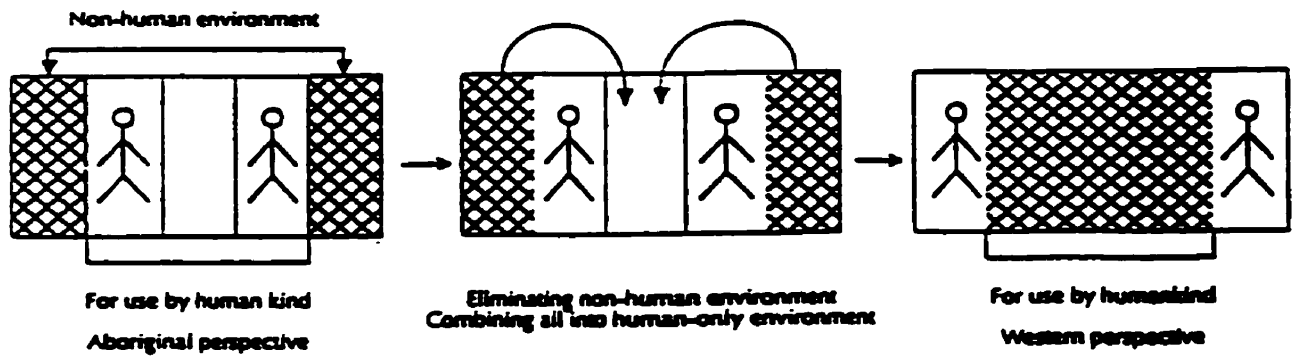
Dockstator's doctoral dissertation (1993) involves the development of a general analytical model of Aboriginal-Western societal relations based on traditional teachings which is then used as a guide to understand those relations historically from contact to the present (Dockstator 1993: 3). He applies this understanding to the subject of Aboriginal self-government in Canada. His

thesis, in modified form, also provided the analytical framework for the historical presentation of Aboriginal-Canadian relations recounted in the first volume of the Final Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996b).

As noted earlier, differentiation within relatedness is a hallmark of Aboriginal thought. Working from the concept of the Original Agreement in Aboriginal cosmology, Dockstator develops an understanding of Aboriginal-Canadian relations. Metaphysically, the Original Agreement establishes two set of parameters. Relationships between human societies constitute internal boundaries which are meant to promote harmony and balance based on difference, relatedness and respect: "These 'human-only' boundaries are established by humankind in response to the amount of land actually used and occupied by each society" (1993: 47). Thus, they can be modified.

The second set of parameters concerns the relationship between human and non-human activity (environment) or the external boundaries of creation which also must be in balance. "If humankind does not respect this natural division, the balance of the environment is disrupted, and in turn, that of all creation" (1993: 47). Thus, this boundary is permanent and not subject to change by human beings. From a Western perspective, the Original Agreement is about dividing the whole of the physical environment, all of which is considered to be for human use whether or not lands are actually used or occupied (1993: 48-49). Furthermore, where the Original Agreement from an Aboriginal perspective was permanent, its existence in Western terms is considered to be only temporary; thus, it can be amended, changed, or replaced in response to change (1993: 50). This discussion is summarized in the diagram and chart below (1993: 49,55). The diagram is a heuristic device and not an actual representation.

**Figure 31: Translating the Aboriginal to the Western perspective of the environment**



**Figure 39: Summary**

**Original Agreement as fence and fulcrum**

Original agreement function	Society	Illustration	Description
As fence (to divide)	Aboriginal	<p>Original Agreement</p>	Division between humans and non-human environment
	Western	<p>Original Agreement</p>	Division between humans only
As fulcrum (to balance)	Aboriginal		Balance by integration
	Western		Balance by separation



These differing understandings of space co-exist in time separately and then in relative harmony until Western society through population increase displaces Aboriginal society.

During this first historical period of contact between Aboriginal nations and Europeans, treaties of peace and friendship defined relations between the two groups. As an articulation of the above conceptualization of societal relations, two row wampum belts constructed at the time of such treaties by the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) were a concrete and symbolic expression of how the two societies were to relate to each other from the perspectives of Aboriginal epistemology.<sup>3</sup> Two parallel rows of purple beads (wampum) are separated by three fields of white beads, which symbolize peace, friendship and respect (Dockstator 1993: 188 n.5).

These two rows will symbolize two paths or two vessels, travelling down the same river together. One, a birch bark canoe, will be for Indian people, their laws, their customs and their ways. The other, a ship, will be for the white people and their laws, their customs and their ways. We shall each travel the river together, side by side, but in our own boat. Neither of us will try to steer the other's vessel. The principles of the Two Row Wampum became the basis for all treaties and agreements that were made with the Europeans and later the Americans...(Canada, Report of the Special Committee on Indian Self-Government in Canada (Chairman: Keith Penner), 1983, cited in Dockstator 1993: 188 n.5).

In the context of his analytical framework, Dockstator offers in the following excerpt an explanation of the two row wampum teaching which provides a crucial understanding of the difference between Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian conceptions of how the two societies would inter-relate:

With respect to the external parameters established by the Original Agreement, the overall nature of the relationship does not change. The shoreline of the river remains fixed and is unaffected by the movement of the vessels on the river. The only change within this framework is the internal relationship, which is in a constant state of flux. As one vessel becomes much larger in relation to the other, the dynamics of the relationship are changed. Within this fluid relationship it is incumbent on the smaller to yield, in certain circumstances, to the movements of the larger entity...If one canoe is larger than

the other, the smaller one must adjust its course in the event of an impending collision. In other words, the smaller canoe must yield the right of way in recognition of the slower response time in altering course of the larger, slower-moving vessel...In analogous fashion each society, regardless of the size of its land base, is free to determine the course travelled by its people...The purpose of subsidiary agreements is to reflect only the changing nature of the internal relationship. As each society adjusts to the movements of the other, subsidiary agreements are necessary to avoid the collision of societal roles and responsibilities. (1993: 84, 82, 83).

From Western perspectives, population increase and the pressure for land to facilitate white settlement does signal the displacement of Aboriginal societies and the decreasing power of Aboriginal societies to be self-determining. Historically, this period of divergence constitutes the second phase of Aboriginal-Canadian relations which spans roughly from the Royal Proclamation of 1763 which formally recognized Indian nations, through to the second Indian Act in 1927 which was premised on assimilation. For Western society, this change necessitates replacing the Original Agreement. For Aboriginal society, now in a minority position, this change involves modifying certain aspects of its behaviour and actions towards Western society but does not affect the substantive nature of the nation-to-nation relationship (1993: 69):

The purpose of subsidiary agreements is to reflect only the changing nature of the internal relationship...From this particular point of view, there is no displacement of Aboriginal society. Consequently, the perspective of Aboriginal society does not include the concept of any "lesser" rights in relation to the position occupied by Western society. The Aboriginal concept is one of "different" rights which, regardless of the nature of the internal relationship, will not affect the basic principle of a nation-to-nation relationship established by the Original Agreement (1993: 85).

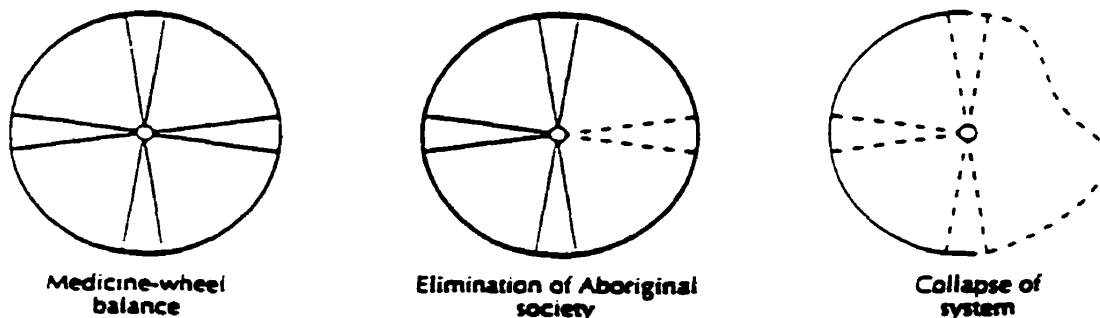
Aboriginal acceptance of difference and the West's inability to respect difference created a profound gap. This gap in understanding explains both the basis for the Western policy of assimilation and Aboriginal resistance to that assimilation. Dockstator explains that from Western perspectives the forced separation of Aboriginal society from Western society was

always premised on its subsequent reintegration (1993: 106). Although separation was achieved through treaties and the reserve system, the failure of the Canadian government to achieve Aboriginal reintegration (i.e. assimilation) through various instruments, including the Indian Act, resulted in a dysfunctional societal relationship (1993: 106). To arrive at a functional relationship implies re-evaluating past assumptions, particularly "the imperative that Aboriginal society reintegrate into Western society as "evolved", or as a mirror-image of Western society" (1993: 107). With the failure to achieve assimilation, Dockstator perceives that a shift is occurring in Western attitude which includes a rejection of the idea that "Aboriginal society be expected to assume the characteristics of Western society as a prerequisite to developing a societal relationship" (1993: 107).

In terms of the gap, Dockstator explains why difference cannot simply be dissolved or assimilated by one society in terms of the other. From the perspective of Aboriginal cosmology, to do so would create a fundamental imbalance in terms of the existence and relatedness of all things in creation. He documents this below through the Medicine Wheel:

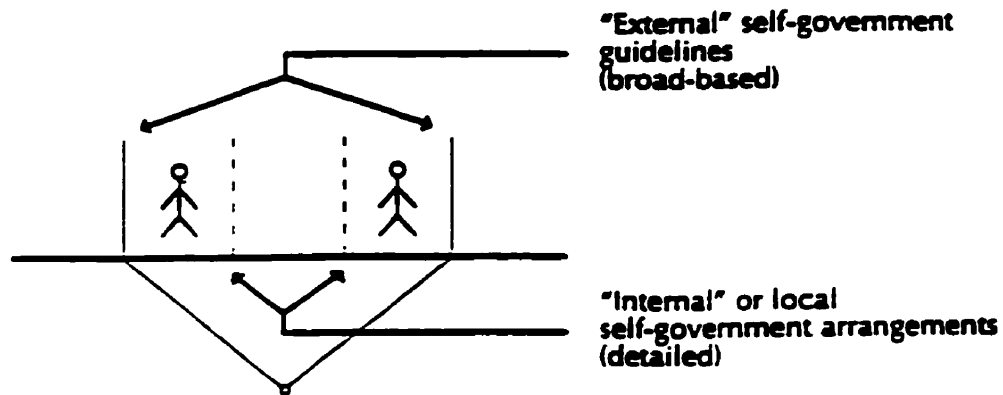
From this philosophical perspective, the elimination of any one society as a distinct entity would result in the collapse of the entire system: moreover, as figure 54 illustrates, it would not be conceptually possible for any other society to assume, or otherwise perform, the role of the missing society (1993: 78).

**Figure 54: Elimination of Aboriginal society as distinct entity**

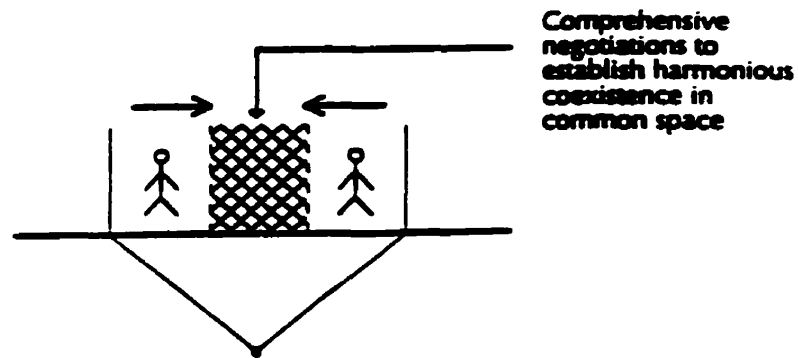


The political struggles of the past thirty years have resulted in some break down of the primary obstacle, namely, the refusal to acknowledge Aboriginal difference. This, in turn, has opened a space for negotiation. From Aboriginal perspectives, negotiation can only begin at the point where the Original Agreement is respected i.e. the parameters of the relationship which establish the sovereignty of each society. On this basis alone can both societies hope to exist as co-equal in a relationship of integrated autonomy. Yet, it is not solely "autonomy" or "self-rule" which is sought. Rather, as was evident in bottom half of the chart (Figure 39) referred to earlier, balance requires relatedness between the two societies, a degree of integration and a co-existence which is distinct from a notion of sovereignty that in Western terms can only be conceived of as "absolute". Re-establishing the internal boundaries between the two societies through self-government creates the "space for mutual relatedness" in co-existence:

**Figure 87: Boundaries established by the stage 5 self-government agreement**



**Figure 88: Purpose of the self-government agreement**



From a Western perspective, this long flow of history, which could lead to a new and possibly shared space with Aboriginal peoples in Canada, feels like movement forward. From the perspective of Aboriginal cosmology, however, the perception of history in relation to time is quite different. Past elides with future in the present; being back at the Original Agreement completes one cycle of time:

Within each cycle of time there are historical events that serve to readjust the internal nature of the societal relationship. The dynamic nature of this relationship takes place within the framework of events that constantly reaffirms, and thus reinforces, the fundamental nature of an equal, Nation-to-Nation relationship between Aboriginal society and Western society (1993: 171).

Having arrived at the beginning again with Aboriginal peoples in Canada, the question for Canada becomes one of whether the liberal state can embrace Aboriginal difference in a way which respects that difference ("self-rule") *and* maintain relations based on respect and reciprocity ("shared rule"). The door which opened and made possible this current period of negotiation was the formal rejection of assimilation as official policy in the early 1970s; one world could not be collapsed into the other. The question which has remained largely submerged since then is: Can the liberal state accommodate this Aboriginal vision of co-existence?

## **Dilemmas**

The dilemmas which Aboriginal people experience in terms of the tensions and contradictions created by colonization under a liberal paradigm are multiple. Taken collectively, they indicate that the terms of reference for this period of negotiation are still under discussion. From the perspective of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, four false assumptions of Western liberalism created obstacles to just, balanced and harmonious relations: that Aboriginal people were inherently inferior and incapable of governing themselves; that treaties were not covenants of trust and obligation but rather were viewed as formal bureaucratic exercises which were less expensive and more acceptable than armed conflict, but were to be ignored frequently; that wardship was appropriate for Aboriginal peoples such that action could be taken without their consent or involvement; that concepts of development, for the individual or community could be defined by non-Aboriginal values alone (RCAP 1996b: 248). While the Royal Commission acknowledges that these assumptions have been officially disavowed, they caution against their reappearance in modern form. One such variation cited is that

Aboriginal peoples constitute an interest group, one among many in a pluralistic society...they are not seen as having legitimate political authority, as being nations entitled to treatment as nations (RCAP 1996b: 252).

The Commission names the "inherent ineffectiveness of the democratic political relationship" for the abuses of power that are justified by the above assumptions. Increased Aboriginal representation in "conventional Canadian democracy" is regarded as "illegitimate" and therefore, no solution:

Aboriginal peoples seek nation-to-nation political relations, and these cannot be achieved simply by representation in Canadian political institutions...Governments in Canada are preoccupied with mediating conflict within the legal and political framework that has

been created over time, while Aboriginal peoples question the foundations of the framework itself (RCAP 1996b: 249, 609).

From the perspective of the Royal Commission, a renewed relationship must start from a different set of premises: the rejection of principles such as assimilation, control, intrusion and coercion and outmoded doctrines such as terra nullius and discovery which reflect attitudes of cultural and racial superiority; a recognition and strengthening of Aboriginal peoples as nations; the creation of room in the Canadian legal and political framework "for Aboriginal peoples to resume their self-governing status" as a third order of government; recognition that the predominant self-representations of Canada in public discourse ignore or misrepresent Aboriginal peoples and their distinct political communities and collectivities; and lastly, a recognition that despite the abuse and distortion caused by colonialism, "Aboriginal cultures were vibrant and distinctive not only in the beginning but remain so today" (RCAP 1996b: 611-612).

As part of a group of writers who are Aboriginal, Turpel describes her own work as "post-colonial" in the sense that "we are all searching for ways to counteract or respond to the dominance, imposition, and exclusion which we have experienced as individuals and collectively in Canada and we attribute to the continuing legacy of colonialism" (n.d: 1). From her critique of colonialism and from practice, she identifies four recurring dilemmas in relation to the Canadian legal system: the problem of partiality of perspective, the problem of containment, legal academic conventions, and the challenge of reconstruction (n.d: 10-11). I interpret these dilemmas as current expressions of the aforementioned false assumptions.

In Turpel's view, partiality of perspective is based on the presumption that Canada's

history is "rooted in a French and English ancestry and cultural mingling" (p. 10). As a result,

Aboriginal peoples and their governments, laws, cultures and histories are excluded or severely marginalized to the sidelines of legal education and practice (p. 10).

Once partiality of perspective is demonstrated by Aboriginal leaders and activists, the reaction of those in dominant institutions is to contain Aboriginal history and knowledge within the same system and within the discourse of rights. Although sovereign claims or political claims of Aboriginal peoples as distinct peoples in Canada are now not denied, there is an attempt

to equate them with an undefined body of rights...which, while challenging, is still the stuff of the mainstream legal system to be conjured, interpreted, and applied by the courts which are a product of a system which illustrates the first dilemma, the problem of partiality (p. 11).

The third problem of academic conventions refers to the burgeoning new literature on Aboriginal issues, produced mostly by non-Aboriginal people which, from Turpel's perspective, is not as problematic as the fact that it universalizes its particular perspective and at best, treats Aboriginal perspectives as add-ons. From my perspective, Turpel is pointing here to the need for a bi-cultural perspective within academia:

The reason this scholarship troubles me is that it comes from a discipline rooted in a partial perspective and seeks to expand that perspective or solve specific problems by engaging in research and writing which does not engage with Aboriginal peoples directly. In this sense, it repeats the dilemma of partiality. *It does not introduce law to Aboriginal perspectives*, although Aboriginal writers are doing this...but it is principally concerned with filling a gap in the law; a gap opened by the realization of the partiality of the official legal stories (p. 11, emphasis added ).

The last dilemma, the challenge of reconstruction, "can only be described as a post-colonial political and social context for legal analysis" (p. 11). In defining the challenge, she



affirms the Aboriginal vision of co-existence and makes an important distinction between post-colonialism and decolonization:

It is not a decolonization challenge because Canada, as a fairly decentralized contemporary federation, will not be decolonized in the same sense of removal of a foreign-controlled government and its replacement with an indigenous government. Canada as a pluralistic nation, with established political institutions, does exist. It is not, in my opinion, possible or desirable to have a complete separation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, nor should we pander to stereotypes of a pure Aboriginal identity unsullied by newcomers, colonialism and consumer culture. We all inherit colonialism in Canada...and simple decolonization is not realistic or possible, in my opinion (p. 12).

Given that separation is not possible or desirable from Aboriginal perspectives, the question then becomes how do we move towards a post-colonial legal system or systems in Canada (p. 12).

Turpel identifies the work that Aboriginal people are doing to bring Aboriginal knowledge and perspective to bear on various systems as post-colonial initiatives. By consistently pushing the boundaries of the issues, such work leads to reconstructive possibilities which recognize cultural difference (p. 12). Cultural difference is understood here

as manifestations of differing human (collective) imaginations, different ways of knowing. The expression "cultural difference" conjures up more than differences of appearances (colour), it allows us to consider profound differences in understanding or social and political life (Turpel, cited in Monture-Angus 1995: 40).

As Aboriginal peoples continue to struggle for their vision of co-existence within Canada, the liberal state is challenged to accommodate that vision. We turn now to Western perspectives on the question of whether the prevailing liberal paradigm in Canada can embrace Aboriginal difference.

## ENDNOTES

1. For example, Fleras states:

Politicians and First Nations often employ similar words but still speak a different language. Terms such as self-government and sovereignty are essentially Anglo-Saxon terms that rarely reflect the experiences of aboriginal realities. Consider the concept of autonomy. For many, autonomy conjures up images of secession and dismemberment; for aboriginal peoples, autonomy resides in the restructuring of their relationship with Canada to secure control over (a) self-government; (b) treaties; (c) land claims; (d) economic development; (e) service delivery; and (f) culture, language, and identity (RCAP, 1993). Not surprisingly, central authorities perceive autonomy in terms of municipal-level, self-governing, administrative structures under provincial jurisdiction. In contrast, aboriginal views of self-government and autonomy are defended on grounds other than crown authority, as self-contained and inherent, not delegated (Cassidy, 1994)... (1996:169)

2. This same pre-Columbian prophecy appears with some variations among different Aboriginal groups. The following is a version of it taken from the Cree-Assiniboine tradition:

Another people shall come, from beyond the salt water, which will take the lands away from the Amerindian peoples and, by means of a drink, try to erase their minds. The Old ones used to say that that drink was snake blood. They knew that the Amerindians would accept this drink from that stranger and that they would thus die in great numbers, to the point of almost becoming extinct, but that in a future time, soon after a time when machines would start carrying men (sic) in the sky, the Native people would give back to the stranger the ill-fated drink and would begin to walk straight once more, to think correctly and to play a dignified and most beneficial role in the world. We have arrived at that time (Sioui 1992:30).

Another version of the same prophecy comes from the Hopi people (circa 1850):

Our people are in our midnight.  
We'll come into our daylight and become leaders,  
when the eagle lands on the moon.

cited by Maggie Hodgson (1988: 123).

3. Although the two row wampum is particular to Haudenosaunee thought and experience with respect to treaty-making, Dockstator indicates that "the analogy of a river or two parallel lines to describe the societal relationship is common to Aboriginal peoples" and cites the following

comments of a Chisasibi Cree speaker:

The old chiefs said that we would have two parallel roads; one would be the First Nations' road, the First Nations' river; the other would be the newcomers' road, the newcomers' river, and no one would try to integrate, to simulate the other. We would live in parallel, in co-existence, in peace and harmony and respect for each others' differences and capacities to determine ourselves, as we are (Dockstator 1993: 189 n.6).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Current Liberal Vision and Critiques**

Going back to the Creator doesn't really help very much. So He gave you title, but you know, did He draw on the land where your mountains stopped and somebody else's began...? God never said that the frontier of France runs along the Rhine or somewhere west of Alsace-Lorraine where the German-speaking people of France live...and I don't think you can expect North America or the whole of the Western Hemisphere to settle things differently...

- Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau (1983)  
(cited in Asch 1984: 31)

The place of aboriginal peoples in the growth and development of Canada is a litmus test of our beliefs in fairness, justice, and equality.

- Red Book of the Liberal Party (1993)

#### **Introduction**

Weaver points out that the "self-defining demands of aboriginal minorities pose unique problems for Western liberal democracies" (1984: 183). In particular, governments are required: to rationalize special treatment of minorities against established ideologies of equality; to perceive aboriginal minorities as collectivities; to cope with the demands of collective rights, not just individual rights; and to relate to Aboriginal minorities in unaccustomed ways (p. 183). The overarching theme evident in this Western interpretation of the challenge posed by the Aboriginal vision of co-existence focuses on meanings of equality in relation to difference.

#### **Kymlicka's Cultural Membership**

Kymlicka (1989) discusses the dilemmas of a culturally pluralist liberalism and highlights

the Aboriginal case in his attempt to "reconcile minority rights and liberal equality" (p.153). Arguing in support of a liberal framework, Kymlicka defines the problem not as a conflict of individual versus group rights but rather as a problem involving two kinds of respect for individuals; namely, as members of a cultural community and as members of a political community (citizenship) (p.150-151). In his view, liberalism "gives no independent weight to our cultural membership, and hence demands equal rights of citizenship, regardless of the consequences for the existence of minority cultures" (p. 152). However, he rejects the position adopted by those who argue in support of Aboriginal self-government for "Aboriginal rights *against* liberalism" on the grounds that it is incomplete or inapplicable (p. 153).<sup>1</sup> He considers non-liberal arguments to be "controversial, legally and morally" and to be weak politically, "for they do not confront liberal fears about minority rights" (p. 153). While the matter of controversy is not a substantive argument, liberal concerns that minority rights could lead to apartheid politics or to violations of rights in the name of the group are worth considering. In order to shift the standard liberal interpretation of viewing Aboriginal rights as matters of discrimination and/or privilege to the ground of equality, "Aboriginal rights...will only be secure when they are viewed, not as competing with liberalism, but as an essential component of liberal political practice" (p.154). Such rethinking requires "a broader and more adequate liberal theory of the relationship between the individual and the community" (p.157).

To accomplish this, Kymlicka extends Rawls' notion of freedom for individuals to form and revise beliefs about value as a precondition for pursuing our essential interests in leading a good life (p. 163). According to Rawls such beliefs are not formed in a vacuum but rather are "tested by innumerable individuals, sometimes for generations" (p. 164). Kymlicka states that the

range of options available to us is determined by our cultural heritage constitutive of linguistic and historical processes (p. 165). Thus, the protection of cultural structures should be the concern of liberals, "not because they have some moral status of their own, but because it's only through having a rich and secure cultural structure that people can become aware...of the options available to them and intelligently examine their value" (p. 165).

In excluding any intrinsic moral status of cultures or "the character of a culture" from his argument, Kymlicka explicitly rejects communitarian positions in favour of what he considers to be a legitimate liberal concern, namely, the promotion and protection of cultural membership as a context of choice (p. 168-170). From Kymlicka's perspective, Rawls' argument is not flawed so much as identified with "a very simplified model of the nation-state, where the political community is co-terminus with one and only one cultural community" (p.177).

In reference to Aboriginal peoples, Kymlicka recognizes that in some cases "the very survival of society does require some restrictions on the (otherwise legitimate) freedom of choice of its members", but these should be viewed as only temporary measures (p.170). These "illiberal" measures are justified as

easing the shock which can result from too rapid change in the character of the culture (be it endogenously or exogenously caused), helping the culture to move carefully towards a fully liberal society...Indian communities have been too weakened (and denigrated) by the white majority to currently allow every individual Indian to enjoy all the liberties she will enjoy once the cultural structure has recovered its normal healthy strength and flexibility (p.170-171).

While Kymlicka argues against the "harms of enforced assimilation" (p.176), he presumes a voluntary assimilation under a liberal framework of individual choice once people have recovered from "unequal circumstances" (p.241). Although "unequal circumstances" provides the

critterion for legitimating Aboriginal rights, he applies the same criterion to exclude the rights of other groups:

Only if we ground collective rights in unequal circumstances can we distinguish the legitimacy of aboriginal rights from the illegitimacy of attempts by assorted racial, religious, class, or gender groups to gain special status for their preferred goals and practices (p.241).

While Kymlicka expands the liberal horizon somewhat against those who argue narrowly the same equality for all regardless of difference, he fails to provide a normative argument from within liberalism which would reconcile minority or collective rights with individual rights. As a result, Aboriginal rights are permitted only as a temporary and exceptional solution.

### **Taylor's Social Thesis**

Taylor (1994) points out that Kymlicka's solution is similar to reverse discrimination proposals which retain a conception of equality founded on the liberal principle of neutrality; in Kymlicka's view to do otherwise engages the State in discrimination. From Taylor's perspective, this does not adequately respond to the politics of difference voiced as a politics of recognition:

But it won't justify some of the measures now urged on the grounds of difference, the goal of which is not to bring us back to an eventual "difference-blind" social space but, on the contrary, to maintain and cherish distinctness, not just now but forever. After all, if we're concerned with identity, then what is more legitimate than one's aspiration that it never be lost? (p.40)

Taylor (1994) in his argument recognizes the totalitarian tendencies of arguments of difference-blind discourses on equality. He takes the question one step further:

Yet still we might want to know whether any politics of equal dignity, based on the recognition of universal capacities, is bound to be equally homogenizing (p.51).

For Taylor, human identity is not constituted through the atomistic individual outside of

society but rather created dialogically in response to our relations and dialogues with others:

Thus my discovering my identity doesn't mean that I work it out in isolation, but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others. That is why the development of an ideal of inwardly generated identity gives a new importance to recognition. My own identity crucially depends on my dialogical relations with others (p.34).

It follows that public recognition of our identities requires a politics to deliberate publicly those aspects of our identities that are shared or potentially shared with other citizens. Extended socially, the very survival of some groups depends on a recognition of their cultural identity. In this regard, Taylor identifies the claims of Quebeckers and more peripherally, of Aboriginal peoples. He argues against a restrictive form of equal rights which refuses to embrace collective goals because it would contravene the principal of neutrality. Taylor identifies this latter position with the 'procedural republic' of the U.S. and English Canada viz-a-viz Quebec which is "inhospitable to difference because it can't accommodate what the members of distinct societies really aspire to, which is survival" (p.61). In his view, other forms of liberal society can accommodate collective goals that enhance cultural survival:

A society with strong collective goals can be liberal, on this view, provided it is also capable of respecting diversity, especially when dealing with those who do not share its common goals; and provided it can offer adequate safeguards for fundamental rights. There will undoubtedly be tensions and difficulties in pursuing these objectives together but such a pursuit is not impossible, and the problems are not in principle greater than those encountered by any liberal society that has to combine, for example, liberty and equality, or prosperity and justice (p.60).

This more hospitable view does entail certain fundamental rights which are not conditioned by cultural difference (for example, habeas corpus) and involves weighing "uniform treatment against the importance of cultural survival, and opts sometimes in favour of the latter" (p.61).

What is important for Taylor is that such judgments are based on a moral view of what makes a



good life; the integrity of cultures has a place in shaping that view.

In advocating universal acceptance of the presumption that all cultures have value as a partial resolution to the dilemma of difference, Taylor stops short of imputing "actual judgments of equal worth applied to the customs and creations of these different cultures" (p.68). To do so, presupposes standards of judgment which ironically could end up homogenizing difference on the terrain of ethnocentricity (p.71). Taylor searches for the midway between "the inauthentic and homogenizing demand for recognition of equal worth...and the self-immurement within ethnocentric standards" (p.72). In the end, the presumption of equal worth is a moral issue requiring comparative cultural study rather than "inauthentic judgments of equal value":

What it requires above all is an admission that we are very far away from that ultimate horizon from which the relative worth of different cultures might be evident. This would mean breaking with an illusion that still holds many "multiculturalists" - as well as their most bitter opponents -in its grip (p.73).

Thus far in this liberal debate on difference, the issue of discrimination by collectivities has not been resolved (or framed another way, that individual rights discriminate less than collective rights potentially could). Kymlicka accepts culture solely as the context for individual choice and freedom; he universalizes the structure of culture and rejects acceptance of the character of culture. There is no critique of liberalism as itself a hegemonic culture which discriminates. In accepting the proposition of collective rights for the necessity of cultural survival, Taylor does enter the terrain of the character of cultures. He accepts collective rights provided that the fundamental rights of individuals are incorporated in that collectivity i.e. rights that are not inherently cultural. He acknowledges the problem in drawing the line between the two but provides no criteria which would satisfy the liberal concern regarding discrimination.

## **Nicholson's Response: Recognition and Power**

Nicholson (1996) is in sympathy with much of Taylor's argument, particularly the demand emerging from a wide variety of struggles to have the distinctive characteristics of one's group recognized as set against older traditions of liberalism that have based notions of rights on what is common among human beings (p.1). She takes issue with his analysis on the point that the central issues of identity can be generalizable across social groups and contexts (p.1). However, in critiquing this "modernist" basis in Taylor, she herself goes beyond advancing a claim about the heterogeneous meaning of identity and recognition (p.2). Using the post-1960s feminist and African American movements in the U.S. as examples, she argues that these struggles

extend the request that the distinguishing traits of both groups be acknowledged towards the request that the social practices through which the very activity of recognition takes place be changed (p. 2).

This focus on the social practices of recognition engenders a way of thinking about multiculturalism, Nicholson argues, that is at conflict with the evaluations of worth made by Taylor (p. 2). Drawing on Marx and Engels, Nicholson makes the point that rising or dominant social groups tend to portray their own interests and ideas as universal. Thus, socially powerful groups in the U.S. "depict others but not themselves as possessing "ethnicity" and men, more than women, tend to see themselves as without gender" (p. 4). It is precisely the goal of visible/excluded groups "to get men and white people respectively to understand elements of their own lives as reflective of a distinctive social experience rather than as reflective of the human condition in general" (p. 4). In part, this is reflective of an expanded notion of oppression as a cultural and thus, social rather than merely political phenomenon (p.6). Thus, the demand for

recognition "goes beyond a simple acknowledgement of difference towards a sense of recognition which focuses as much on the one doing the recognizing as on the one being recognized" (p. 6). Power and imbalances of power necessarily enter the discussion in terms of claims to universality which, in effect, are historically specific perspectives (p. 6).

How does this position conflict with Taylor's view? Taylor critiques difference-blind liberalism as a reflection of hegemonic culture "not only inhuman (because suppressing identities) but also, in a subtle and unconscious way, itself highly discriminatory" (1994: 43). He thus focuses on the recognizers as much as those to be recognized. In addition, he advances a version of multiculturalism as the equal value of different cultures. Nicholson states that Taylor defines the demands around multiculturalism in accord with its weaker versions, thus his argument is less strong than it could be (p.10).

The weak version is Taylor's conclusion that further study will enable us to see the worth of all cultures; the stronger version "would claim that judgments of equal worth be attributed to all cultures as a matter of right" (p.10). Taylor argues against the latter on the grounds that judgments of value cannot be based on principles of ethics; to do so would dissolve independent criteria for value judgments into commitments i.e. into the subjective:

The proponents of neo-Nietzschean theories hope to escape this whole nexus of hypocrisy by turning the entire issue into one of power and counterpower. Then the question is no more one of respect, but of taking sides, of solidarity. But this is hardly a satisfactory solution, because in taking sides they miss the driving force of this kind of politics, which is precisely the search for recognition and respect (cited in Nicholson, p.11).

According to Nicholson, Taylor's solution is to presume the worth of cultures and then justify the presumption through knowledge of those groups, "stretching ourselves to the point where our standards transform themselves" (p. 11). For Nicholson, Taylor's framing of "we" and "our

standards" with regard to excluded groups is highly problematic because it

makes the central question the validity of only certain judgments of worth i.e., those made by previously excluded groups...(and) thereby diminishes a focus on the validity of the judgments of worth made by those from socially privileged groups (p. 11).

Furthermore, Nicholson points out that Taylor "seems to be saying that judgments of the good must be independent of judgments of right" (p. 10). The premise of objectivity also highlights reason to the exclusion of interests or emotion and ultimately, power:

Like many contemporary philosophers, Taylor here seems caught in the belief that either judgment has nothing to do with desire or power or that judgment is reducible to such and all talk of standards must disappear...What Taylor's response ignores is the possibility of different kinds of power: the power that specific understandings of what is reasonable exert in distinction from the power exerted by claims which make reference to force or authority alone (p.12-13).

Nicholson concludes by arguing for a shift in focus from judgments of worth to the process by which those judgments "have and can be made" (p.15). Recognizing that oppression manifests not only in exclusion but also more subtly regarding judgment, such discussion about multiculturalism would not preclude power but rather begin by acknowledging that

We need to know more about the conditions which contribute to or undermine imbalances of power in the resolution of disagreements about worth before we can assess the degree to which past judgments *have been* free of such or the degree to which new claims about worth *can* be free of such (p.15).

In some respects, Taylor's "social thesis" represents the view of recent federal governments with respect to the Aboriginal vision. This position found perhaps its best expression in the Charlottetown Accord of 1992, where a place for Aboriginal cultures, articulated as a third order of government, was contemplated within federalism. Significantly, it was the first time Native leaders were allowed to participate as partners in a national constitutional dialogue. This view of liberalism stands in contrast to its inhospitable version

typified by the assimilationist, same equality-for-all policy of Trudeau's White Paper in 1969. Yet the momentary hope raised by the Charlottetown Accord was defeated not only in the subsequent referendum but in the unwillingness of politicians to act in accord with the principles which enabled agreement to occur in the first place; in other words, to recognize de facto, if not de jure, the inherent right to self-government. The reporting of the Royal Commission in 1996 provides another such opportunity but the current federal government has remained largely silent with regard to the same recommendations.

Deep tensions concerning the relation between equality and difference within liberalism continue and while Taylor's social thesis is helpful, from a critical perspective it remains on the surface. Nicholson makes a useful contribution to this debate by introducing the problematics of the social practices of recognition in relation to the meaning of recognition. Bannerji looks underneath the surface and addresses the dark side of difference as constructed in Taylor's vision of multiculturalism.

### **Bannerji's Critique: From Difference to Diversity**

Bannerji (1996) examines multiculturalism as a discursive mode which constructs "national" identity in Canada in relation to the State. She is particularly concerned with the "others", officially constructed as "visible minorities", "immigrants", "new Canadians", and "ethnics":

There is a fundamental unease with how our difference is construed and constructed by the state, how our otherness in relation to Canada is projected and objectified. We cannot be successfully ingested, or assimilated, or made to vanish from where we are not wanted. We remain an ambiguous presence, our existence a question mark in the side of the nation, with the potential to disclose much about the political unconscious and

consciousness of Canada as an "imagined community". Disclosures accumulate slowly, while we continue to live here as outsider-insiders of the nation... (p.105).

Others, including Aboriginal authors have pointed out that multiculturalism in Canada developed on the foundation of biculturalism/bilingualism as a way of resolving the "unity" issue between Canada and Quebec. Similar to Turpel (1993a), what Bannerji brings to this analysis is the understanding that the Quebec/English Canada question is an unresolved relation between two colonial powers vying for domination and control:

...these two solitudes turned out to be two invading European nations - the French and the English - which might have produced two colonial-nation states in this part of North America. But history did not quite work out that way. Instead of producing two settler colonial countries like Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and South Africa, they held a relation of conquest and domination with each other...These then are the two solitudes...(who) shape the ideological parameters of Canadian constitutional debates and whose "survival" and relations are continually debated (p.106).

Colonialism, then, is the entry point for understanding the social relations between visible minorities and the State (p.107). In this context, Aboriginal peoples and their demands for self-government/self-determination experience not only continued marginalization but their presence also acts

as the absent signifiers within Canadian national politics (which) works at all times as a bedrock of its national definitional project, giving it a very particular contour through the same absences, silences, exclusions and marginalizations. In this there is no distinction between "COQ" (Canada outside Quebec) or English Canada and Quebec (p. 106-107).

In a similar fashion, "visible minorities" and the ideology of multiculturalism act "as the core of the state's claim to universality or transcendence":

This is because the very discourse of nationhood in the context of "Canada", given its evolution as a capitalist state derived from a white settler colony with aspirations to liberal democracy, needs an ideology that can mediate fissures and ruptures more deep and profound than those of the usual capitalist nation state. That is why usually undesirable others, consisting of non-white peoples...are discursively inserted in the

middle of a dialogue on hegemonic rivalry (p.109).

Thus, "difference" reinforces a pluralist ethos while making unity dependent on that difference; difference is evoked and erased at the same moment in a power-neutral discourse of "diversity" of cultures and identities (p. 109). In the context of such hollowness:

The issue of First Nations - their land claims, languages and cultures - provides another dimension entirely, so violent and deep that the state of Canada dare not even name it in the placid language of multiculturalism (p. 109).

Similar to Nicholson, Bannerji states that to speak of culture without addressing power relations in a cultural pluralist discourse "displaces and trivializes deep contradictions... subverting demands for anti-racism and political equality" (p.110). In light of this analysis, she rejects Taylor's argument and his reliance on the discourse of multiculturalism. She states that "multiculturalism as an ideological device both enhances and erodes Taylor's project" (p.112). Her critique, as noted earlier, is similar to Nicholson on the issue of power relations and social practices. However, with reference to an additional work of Taylor's she goes further in exposing the tensions in his formulation.

Referring to Taylor's work *Reconciling the Solitudes* (1993), Bannerji points out the distinction he makes between "first level diversity" and "deep diversity" (p. 111). First level diversity refers to those who can subscribe to Canada with some sense of commonality within the European-Anglo framework. From Bannerji's perspective this surface diversity, as Taylor identifies it, amounts to

a Trudeau-like stance of dual unification in which non-European "others" are made to lend support to the enterprise by their existence as a tolerated, managed difference (p.112).

However, as we have already seen, Taylor's main argument is in support of recognition, and for a

respect and inclusion of cultural difference. Hence, Taylor addresses the need for deep diversity in addition to surface diversity:

To build a country for everyone, Canada would have to allow for second-level or "deep" diversity in which a plurality of ways of belonging would also be acknowledged and accepted. Someone of, say, Italian extraction in Toronto, or Ukrainian extraction in Edmonton might feel Canadian as a bearer of individual rights in a multicultural mosaic. His or her belonging would not "pass through" some other community, although the ethnic identity might be important to him or her in various ways. But this person might nevertheless accept that a Quebecois or a Cree or a Dene might belong in a very different way, that these persons were Canadian through being members of their national communities. Reciprocally, the Quebecois, Cree, or Dene would accept the perfect legitimacy of the "mosaic" identity (cited in Bannerji, p.113).

Bannerji critiques Taylor's notion of deep diversity on several counts: it appears as an ideological utopia of difference, a kind of cultural federalism; he ignores the social relations of power, thus ignoring that different differences are not just forms of diversity; by arguing that differences are culturally intrinsic, he evades race, class, gender and other relations of power (p.113). Thus, Bannerji remains sceptical of Taylor's notion of "a differentiated citizenship...while leaving the Anglo-French European "national" (colonial and racist) core intact" (p. 113). Difference read through "race", for example, creates a "minority" rather than full-fledged adult citizens and a patron-client relationship between the state and "others" (p.123). In this light, "multiculturalism as a form of bounty or state patronage is a managed version of our anti-racist politics" (p. 124). If political economy is added to the discussion on multiculturalism, institutionalized racism and ethnocentricism become even more visible (p. 119, 121). Bannerji concludes that

until we have developed a wider political space, using the avenues of liberal democracy may be necessary...(but) we must also remember that liberalism, no matter who practices it, does not answer our real needs (p.125).

Bannerji's critique of cultural pluralist frameworks contains several important



implications with respect to the recognition of Aboriginal difference. Given that the doctrine of cultural pluralism developed on the foundation of biculturalism/bilingualism in Canada, equality for Aboriginal peoples becomes little more than an add on to an established hierarchy, serving to further legitimate the State. Aboriginal difference is not recognized as such but rather is reduced to an a-historical, homogenized claim concerning diversity. In Kymlicka's terms, we all come from somewhere culturally but where doesn't matter. In Taylor's terms, culture does matter. To make culture the basis of true equality would mean full engagement on the terrain of deep diversity. Two implications emerge: surface diversity would need to be contested for such a breakthrough to occur and deep diversity would need to be dealt with on its own terms, opening the door to different differences. Both would necessarily expose deep inequality and engage the real social relations of power.

In side-stepping issues of power relations, cultural pluralist paradigms deny colonization. For this reason, Aboriginal peoples have consistently refused recognition on the basis of ethnicity (Chambon and Bellamy 1995: 141) and have rejected inclusion on the basis of multiculturalism (RCAP 1996b: xxiv). Aboriginal peoples, like many marginalized "others" in Canada, continue to struggle on the terrain of liberalism for limited gains even as they resist it as a framework of domination which seeks to contain their difference. If we consider colonization in relation to or alongside multiculturalism, then domination in the relation between recognizers and those who seek recognition can no longer be avoided.

Given the fundamental tensions between Aboriginal perspectives and the limitedness of liberal frameworks of cultural pluralism, it is important to review any alternative philosophical approaches which could move Aboriginal-Canadian relations away from relations of domination

towards decolonization. Fraser (1996) in her reflections on the so-called "post-socialist" condition<sup>2</sup> provides a useful opening in her argument for a philosophical approach which integrates the politics of recognition with the politics of redistribution.

### **Fraser's Alternative Vision: No Recognition without Redistribution**

Fraser (1997) begins with a now familiar critique of cultural pluralism:

The pluralist version of multiculturalism is premised on a one-sided understanding of difference: difference is viewed as intrinsically positive and inherently cultural. This perspective accordingly celebrates difference uncritically while failing to interrogate its relation to inequality. Like the American pluralist tradition from which it descends, it proceeds - contrary to fact - as if U.S. society contained not class divisions or other deep-seated structural injustices, as if its political economy were basically just, as if its various constituent groups were socially equal. Thus, it treats difference as pertaining exclusively to culture. The result is to divorce questions of difference from material inequality, power differentials among groups, and systemic relations of dominance and abuse (p. 185).

She posits an alternative framework for analyzing equality and difference. Egalitarian theorists have been concerned with two types of injustice: socio-economic and cultural, leading to two types of remedies, redistribution and recognition respectively (1997:13-15). The distinction between them is analytical because they are inter-related:

Redistributive remedies generally presuppose an underlying conception of recognition. For example, some proponents of egalitarian socioeconomic redistribution ground their claims on the "equal moral worth of persons"; thus, they treat economic redistribution as an expression of recognition. Conversely, recognition remedies sometimes presuppose an underlying conception of redistribution. For example, some proponents of multicultural recognition ground their claims on the imperative of a just distribution of the "primary good" of an "intact cultural structure"; they therefore treat cultural recognition as a species of redistribution (p.15-16).

People who are subject to both socio-economic and cultural injustice on the basis of gender and "race" require the remedies of both redistribution and recognition. However, a dilemma arises

because both claims stand in tension with each other. Recognition claims "tend to promote group differentiation" (p.16) while redistribution claims "often call for abolishing economic arrangements that underpin group specificity" or "group dedifferentiation" (p. 16). This results in a need for people to both claim and deny their specificity (p. 16).

Fraser suggests that "the scenario that best finesses the redistribution-recognition dilemma is socialism in the economy plus deconstruction in the culture" (p.31).<sup>3</sup> She contrasts this possibility with the problematics of affirmative policies of the liberal state. Redistribution under the liberal welfare state "can have the perverse effect of promoting class differentiation, (whereas) transformative remedies tend to blur it (p.26)." In terms of recognition, the disadvantaged can be stigmatized, "adding the insult of misrecognition to the injury of deprivation" (p. 26).

Fraser also contrasts affirmative remedies for recognition or mainstream multiculturalism with the transformative possibilities available through deconstruction. Her critique is similar to both Nicholson and Bannerji:

This sort of multiculturalism proposes to redress disrespect by revaluing unjustly devalued group identities, while leaving intact both the contents of those identities and the group differentiations that underlie them. Transformative remedies by contrast are currently associated with deconstruction. They would redress disrespect by transforming the underlying cultural-valuation structure. By destabilizing existing group identities and differentiations, these remedies would not only raise the self-esteem of members of currently disrespected groups; they would change *everyone's* sense of self (p.24).

Fraser's analysis is very helpful with respect to understanding Aboriginal-Canadian relations. The Aboriginal struggle combines needs for recognition and redistribution if a minimal justice is ever to be met. From Aboriginal perspectives, these needs are highly inter-related and inter-dependent. Land and other resources encompass both the spiritual and material dimensions

of cultures. Where Fraser's alternative breaks down with regard to Aboriginal peoples and their visions for self-determination is in terms of deconstruction - a prerequisite which she applies universally to all groups. Fraser acknowledges this weakness in an endnote:

Whether this conclusion holds as well for nationality and ethnicity remains a question. Certainly bivalent collectivities of indigenous peoples do not seek to put themselves out of business as groups (n.45, p.39).

This is as far as the discussion goes: the contradiction is identified but it remains unresolved. Nonetheless, Fraser's alternative proposal is useful as a framework for examining the two predominant conceptualizations of Aboriginal-Canadian relations evident in the literature: ethnicity and internal colonialism.

## **Section 2: Two Conceptual Frameworks**

### **Introduction**

Two non-Aboriginal formulations for understanding and interpreting Aboriginal-Canadian relations exist in the literature: the ethnicity approach which examines the politics of recognition and internal colonialism which analyzes the problems of Aboriginal dependency. The boundaries between these approaches are at times very fluid depending on the writer (Kulchyski 1988:247). Similarly, within each of these broad frameworks, there are a variety of perspectives.

In its broad outline, ethnicity is the concept used to examine inter-group relations which are based on cultural or ethnic difference. While definitions of ethnicity vary tremendously (Isajiw 1985) and are used to describe very different phenomena, Weaver defines ethnicity as "the recognition of cultural differences between collectivities or groups in a nation-state"

(1984:184). Aboriginal peoples are positioned as disadvantaged ethnic minorities within the liberal state and Native struggles are viewed as interest group politics.

A more critical variant of this approach is adopted by some scholars. Levin et al (1993) examine Aboriginal claims for self-determination from the perspective of "ethnonationalism". The problematic of liberal pluralism is exposed: "the state, legitimized by an open, tolerant, relativist ideology of self-determination weakens itself in acknowledging the same rights for peoples within its boundaries" (Levin 1993:4). Solutions from absolute sovereignty to forms of consociation are explored.

The second major conceptual framework used to examine Aboriginal-Canadian relations is internal colonialism. Unlike the ethnicity approach where Aboriginal relations are analyzed in the context of cultural inter-group relations, as a conceptual framework, internal colonialism has the advantage of focusing specifically on the historically particular situation of Aboriginal peoples (Emberley 1993:18). As an application of neo-Marxist theory, it examines the historically-specific nature of the structured inequality underlying Aboriginal-Canadian relations. Aboriginal peoples are positioned as an internal colony and their politics are interpreted as movements towards decolonization (Kulchyski 1988:247).

Generally, the internal colonial framework adapts the classic features of colonialism to explain the oppression of Aboriginal peoples, their dependent position and their current political struggle for self-determination. While internal colonialism acknowledges cultural difference, its explanations for the current demise of Aboriginal-Canadian relations focus almost exclusively on political economy. Economic exploitation is understood as the most salient factor for establishing and perpetuating internal colonization. The point of political and social control is to extract

economic reward (Frideres 1988:372).

Other variations view internal colonialism as paradigmatically a political issue (Emberley 1993:18). Separate legal status (Boldt, Long, with Little Bear 1984), persisting coerced tutelage on the part of the Canadian State (Dyck 1991), and dispossession and marginalization on the part of the State in relation to capitalism (Kulchyski 1988) are all associated with internal colonialism. An underlying theme is the degree to which cultural difference is accommodated in these analyses.

### **Ethnicity Approaches**

The ethnicity approach in its early applications to Aboriginal peoples in Canada took the form of acculturation theory. Social disorganization, cultural conflict, and feelings of inferiority reflected an inability on the part of certain groups of people to adjust to rapid social and cultural change (Long and Dickason 1996:1-2). Such theory not only supported the idea of a neutral liberal state but also assumed the superiority of dominant groups and societies with the consequence that Aboriginal peoples were blamed for having inadequate skills, lacking understanding of European ways and being unwilling to alleviate their social problems (p. 2). Acculturation theory was based on the ethnocentric assumption that assimilation was the only solution to the "Indian problem". Shewell (1995) documents how the widespread adoption of this theory in studies of Aboriginal peoples by social scientists in the 1950s and 1960s reinforced the Indian Affairs policy of "citizenship" in order to penetrate and expand State control over Native territories for economic development (p. 497-504).

More contemporary applications of an ethnicity approach to Aboriginal-Canadian

relations do not assume assimilation but rather posit a unique Aboriginal identity in the context of a Euro-Canadian social formation. In this respect, Aboriginal struggles and claims are perceived as similar to those of other disadvantaged ethnic minorities, particularly French Canadians (Kulchyski 1988:249).

With regard to a unique ethnic identity, Weaver argues that the architects of the 1969 White Paper viewed Indian ethnicity as a negative concept, the result of Indian reaction to exclusion, and not as a positive feature in its own right (1981:117). In her early work, she suggests that "Indianness" or Indian ethnicity would be a better framework for understanding Native politics (p. 196, cited in Kulchyski 1988: 249). In her later works, Weaver refines and expands her analysis of federal Indian policy through the lens of ethnicity. She critiques federal policy for retaining a static conception of ethnicity that "freezes cultural idioms in some historic moment" and "fails to comprehend that ethnicity is a process that unfolds over time as groups continually select and reinterpret diverse cultural forms (native and non-native) in defining themselves as distinct" (1985a:146). Weaver interprets Aboriginal rights as

a multivalent symbol representing a broad political claim against the state for recognition of their unique ethnicity and for the resources (laws, jurisdiction, programs, land) flowing from this recognition (p. 147).

Weaver makes a distinction between "private ethnicity", understood as self-defining behaviour and "public ethnicity", the sphere of relations between the nation-state and Aboriginal minorities (1984:184). From this perspective, the central change which has occurred in Aboriginal-Canadian relations is perceived as a shift from the State defining Aboriginal ethnicity to one where "Aboriginal minorities became active in attempting to negotiate their own symbols of public ethnicity" (p. 185). For Weaver,

**This dynamic is a contest of power between aboriginal political movements and federal governments, wherein each side tries to establish its own preferred definition as the one officially sanctioned by the nation-state (p. 185).**

**In other essays, Weaver has analyzed the dynamics of this power struggle particularly in the policy-making arena from the perspective of interest group politics. She has examined in detail, for example, the relations between the National Indian Brotherhood and the federal cabinet in the 1970s as "a unique experiment in pressure group relations" (1982) and the issue of representivity viz-a-viz negotiations between national Aboriginal organizations and federal governments in Canada and Australia (1985b). In terms of self-government, Weaver has critiqued the federal government for its lack of a coherent policy and for providing symbolic initiatives "rather than the serious instruments of political transformation" (1992:109).**

**Weaver has made a substantive contribution to understanding the dynamics of negotiation in policy processes involving Aboriginal organizations and the federal government throughout the last thirty years. I agree, however, with Kulchyski's critique that while Weaver posits a "unique" ethnic identity for Aboriginal people, it remains an identity which Weaver refuses to elaborate on (1988:249).<sup>4</sup> For Kulchyski, this "implies that the struggle of Native peoples is similar to the struggle of other disadvantaged ethnic minorities" (p. 249). In my view, by leaving the uniqueness of that identity unexplored and unnamed, it remains empty. Weaver never enters the difference which makes a difference and which is at the heart of the ongoing contestation and power struggle. By separating Aboriginal ethnicity into public and private spheres, in a kind of boundary maintenance, Weaver does not explore the possibility that the cultural content of the so-called private ethnicity of Aboriginal peoples is deeply connected to and implicated in the public struggle for cultural and political recognition and as such, affects the very dynamics of**



policy-making processes which she analyzes.

This weakness of ethnicity approaches with regard to Aboriginal-Canadian relations becomes more evident in those writers who compare explicitly the Aboriginal struggle with that of Quebec's bid for sovereignty. Gibbins and Ponting (1986) articulate that struggle as the "Indian Quiet Revolution":

For instance, both populations have gone through a secularization of their educational system and in both populations the average level of educational attainment has increased significantly. In step with urbanization and educational change there has emerged a new Indian middle class, proportionately smaller than in Quebec but in attitudes, skills, and aspirations not unlike the new Quebec middle class that was such a driving force for social and political change. Like the Quebecois, Indians have been exposed to movements of national liberation throughout the world, and the examples have exerted an influence on Indian political thought, demands and rhetoric. As Quebecois nationalists stressed and defended the territorial sovereignty of Quebec, so too have Indians repeatedly emphasized the importance of Indian land, and of Indian control of Indian land. In addition, Indians, like Quebecois, stress their unique cultural identity and at times have seemed to challenge the existence and value of a pan-Canadian nationality. Finally, demands for Indian government, or the transfer of the political authority of the federal government to Indian hands, parallel, in many respects, the Parti Quebecois proposals for sovereignty-association (p. 34-35).

Although Gibbins and Ponting refer to these and other changes as part of the "transition toward decolonization" their framework of analysis in this instance is that of a comparative approach of ethnicities (1986: 53).

Ponting, in his own work, applies an analysis of internal colonialism in a very general and broad way to interpret the shifts in federal policy since 1969 (1986a:394). However, when it comes to assessing implications for future policy directions, Ponting, in the same text, relies on an ethnicity analysis and, following Breton, suggests that Aboriginal leaders should move away from vesting "Indian interests in the nonIndian state" and adopt a new constitutional strategy based on institution-building at the community level as "the maximum feasible degree of

institutional completeness of local-level Indian states and Indian communities" (1986a: 406).

Viewed through the eyes of Western philosophers and social scientists, it will always be tempting, though flawed, to compare Aboriginal relations with the Canadian state to that of Quebec. Understanding the historically specific and unique nature of Aboriginal-Canadian relations could help to counteract this unhelpful tendency evident in ethnicity approaches. As discussed in Chapter One in relation to Aboriginal epistemology, when viewed from Aboriginal perspectives, Aboriginality and the vision of co-existence flowing from that Aboriginality is a fundamentally different construct that cannot be fully apprehended by these partial perspectives and must be understood on its own terms, if it is to be understood at all. As Dockstator's work reveals, the tracing of Aboriginality in time presents the repressed side of Canadian history. Such a tracing leads to a very different conclusion than the Quebec case for sovereignty. As one Aboriginal leader puts it, "While others are trying to negotiate their way out of Confederation, we are trying to negotiate our way in" (cited in Asch 1984: 105).

While the ethnicity approach relies primarily on culture to explain inter-group dynamics, in the face of large political debates concerning power relations, it is evident that these authors have had to incorporate some notion of the State in relation to ethnicity; such notions remain largely undeveloped in the above analyses. However, "ethnonationalism", as another variant of the ethnicity approach, does focus on macro political issues. Yet authors working from this perspective still vary with respect to the degree of theoretical development of their conceptions of the State.

Asch (1984) discusses Aboriginal-Canadian relations as an ethnonationalist struggle. His overriding concern is to find an accommodation within the liberal state that can embrace

Aboriginal rights as ethnonational political rights. Asch finds such an accommodation in the concept of consociation as exemplified by the cases of Belgium and Switzerland, where ethnic minority rights are accommodated and protected as "segments" within liberal democratic states; since special rights apply to such segments, the pressure for assimilation to universal norms is mitigated (1984: 74-88). With respect to Canada, Asch discusses in detail the "French fact" as a basis for arguing that consociation does indeed exist despite the use of a universalist ideology and hence, no accommodation, when it comes to Aboriginal rights:

...to hear politicians' remarks about aboriginal self-government one might be led to believe that the entire idea was foreign to Canadian political thought! Yet, it is obvious that, in the face of the French fact, the structure of the Canadian state, unlike that of the United States, is organized in the belief that it can accommodate ethnonational political rights (1984:83).

While Asch exhibits more awareness of the content of Aboriginal claims from within Aboriginal difference (1984: 14-22) than Weaver does, there remains the imposition of a Western framework, in this case, consociational democracy. In Kulchyski's view, ethnonationalist perspectives fail to understand that "the specific struggle of Native people is not modelled on the concept of nationalism as it has been developed in the western world" (1988:254). The understanding of "nation" from Aboriginal perspectives cannot be equated with "the state" in the Western sense of "nation-state". Boldt and Long propose an alternative conception of "stateless nationhood" which comes much closer to expressing that difference in relation to Aboriginal conceptions (1985:367-74). Community is the basis for and the authority upon which nationhood rests and as such, statehood and the condition of hierarchical authority which it implies is neither necessary or desired (p. 340). While Asch does not equate Aboriginal self-government with the Western nation-state explicitly, if consociation was adopted formally,

the Western division of powers and distinction in rights associated with consociation would form the basis of debate. Aboriginal leaders have consistently and clearly rejected this approach to discussion of their rights. Indeed, as noted in Chapter One, the liberal conception of rights is viewed as very limited from Aboriginal perspectives. In addition, Boldt and Long observe that Aboriginal leaders have rejected consociation because of its emphasis on rule by elites (1985:343).

A recent series of essays (Levin et al 1993) also interprets Aboriginal struggles as ethnonationalism. In particular, these essays examine the political dilemma of cultural pluralism in the context of a limited number of nation-states and share the view that "the use of compromise, negotiation, and coexistence to create cultural autonomy within existing states is preferable to secession" (p. 6, 176). In my view, these authors represent the practical side of the earlier philosophical debate on liberalism and its ability/inability to come to terms with difference in a framework of universal equality. In Levin's articulation, the strong sense of ethnonationalism, understood as cessation to form new states out of existing nation-states, derives from the same, relatively recent, Western ideal of self-determination that propelled and justified the original creation of nation-states:

There is some irony in the absoluteness of the solution; the state, legitimized by an open, tolerant, relativist ideology of self-determination weakens itself in acknowledging the same rights for peoples within its boundaries (p. 4).

The weak sense of ethnonationalism, defined as the acceptance of the right to self-determination, is also problematic "since it leaves unanswered the question of what forms of institutional recognition can meet the aspirations of 'people' for autonomy" (p. 4).

Within this framework, Aboriginality is based on "a more refined claim to

distinctiveness": status as original occupants is emphasized and restricted to places 'discovered' by Europeans after 1492; a claim against immigrant ethnic groups is also made (p. 4-5). Levin recognizes that in the Canadian context, both Quebecois nationalists and First Nations reject the 'ethnic' label and that "ethnicity" is "used as a counter to the claims of exclusivity or priority which are inherent in aboriginal-founding status" (p. 169). By a rather strange logic, he also asserts "that linking the concept of aboriginality to ethnicity is one way in which ethnonationalist claims are strengthened" (p. 169). The question remains: does ethnicity strengthen aboriginality? From Aboriginal perspectives it does not and cannot - the very difference mitigates against it. Nonetheless, the two essays in this volume which directly address Aboriginal-Canadian relations provide strong critiques of the Canadian state and some openings towards accommodation. I will review them briefly.

Asch (1993) repeats his argument regarding consociation, this time with respect to the Canadian constitution and the inherent right to self-government and self-determination. In a more critical vein, Asch challenges the supposed neutrality of the Canadian state and its application of universal equality with respect to Aboriginal claims. He argues that "our espoused universalistic ideology in fact masks assumptions about the moral legitimacy of our occupation of Canada that have colonial and racist overtones" (p. 32). He makes his argument in favour of Aboriginal sovereignty by applying the same criteria Canada used to assert its legitimacy to govern. The four criteria which justify acquisition of new territory are by conquest or military subjugation, cessation or transfer by treaty, annexation without military action or treaty, and settlement of previously unoccupied territory (p. 44). The Canadian courts have repeatedly relied on the settlement thesis, which, while there were original occupants, "the settlers were superior to the

original inhabitants" (p. 47). Asch argues for the cessation thesis, which is used explicitly in Canadian law where written treaties were made, but which is "still subordinate to the settlement thesis in constitutional ideology" (p. 48). Asch states that if cessation were the dominant theme Canadian governments would seek actively to negotiate with Aboriginal peoples "rather than defend itself in litigation through the settlement theory's presumption of the Sovereign's unilateral right to extinguish aboriginal sovereignty" (p. 49). Ideologically, however, the settlement thesis in its colonial form fits with the universalistic ideology of the majority of individuals, where Aboriginal peoples as a small minority of individuals, not as collectivities, are forced to accept the domination of the institutions of the majority (p. 50). In Asch's understanding, adopting the Aboriginal perspective that treaties were about peace and friendship and not about extinguishment of their "rights" or lands, would lead eventually to negotiated forms of confederation which he equates with direct consociation (p. 51).

Macklem (1993) covers the same ground as Asch with respect to the Canadian legal system and Aboriginal rights. He deconstructs the logic of racism which pervades the system (p.12) and asserts that

It is no longer acceptable to rely on the reasons relied on by the settling nations. Native difference and inferiority are no longer constitutionally acceptable justifications for the continued assertion of Canadian sovereignty (p. 27).

Macklem contests the supposedly incontestable nature of Canadian sovereignty. He argues that its incontestability "is established and maintained in legal discourse by a rhetoric of similarity and difference" (p. 11). With respect to Aboriginal peoples,

The law has constructed Native people as different when to acknowledge their similarities would threaten basic organizing categories of the Anglo-Canadian legal imagination, but it simultaneously has viewed Native people as similar to non-Native people when to

acknowledge difference would threaten basic legal categories of the Anglo-Canadian legal imagination (p. 11).

This interplay has resulted in the imposition of norms and legal relationships of dependence between Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian State (p. 11). It has also resulted in the construction of "a legal aboriginal identity" which has affected Aboriginal self-understandings expressed "in a complex form of resistance and acceptance of aspects of an aboriginal identity that the law holds out to First Nations as their own" (p. 12). Macklem views the 1982 Constitutional recognition of Aboriginal rights as "an interpretative site for debate" for the questioning of assumptions regarding Canadian sovereignty (p. 26).<sup>5</sup>

These latter two essays, while framed within an ethnonationalist perspective, involve a critique of colonialism and specifically, the ideological traces of colonialism to be found in the assumptions behind the Canadian constitution, decisions by Canadian courts, and the legal system generally with respect to Aboriginal peoples, their identities and rights. It is to the second broad conceptual framework used to analyze Canadian-Aboriginal relations, internal colonialism, that we now turn.

### **Internal Colonialism**

In the Western literature, "internal colonialism" refers to peoples colonized and displaced *within* a nation state. While Canada itself was a colony of Britain, the most intense period of colonialism with respect to Aboriginal peoples occurred *after* 1867 as part of the Canadian elite's nation-building strategy. Conceptually, in the Western literature, internal colonialism with respect to Aboriginal peoples applies to the "settler colonies" of Canada, Australia and New

Zealand. However, Hechter (1975), Williams (1977), and Blauner (1969) have also used an internal colonialism framework to discuss respectively Ireland, Wales, and the position of Afro-Americans in the U.S.

In this section, I will examine briefly the various definitions and features of internal colonialism as a conceptual framework. This will be followed by a discussion of several analyses of internal colonialism in the Canadian context.

### **Definitions and Features**

Hechter, in his discussion of English-Irish relations, makes the distinction between "internal colonialism" and "internal colonization".

Internal colonialism, or the political incorporation of culturally distinct groups by the core, must be distinguished from internal colonization, or the settlement of previously unoccupied territories within state borders (1975: 32).

Applying a core/periphery, metropole/hinterland analysis to Indigenous peoples, Hechter states that some aspects of internal colonialism "bear many similarities to descriptions of the overseas colonial situation" (p. 33). These include: the monopolization of commerce and trade in the periphery by the core; the monopolization of credit which forces dependency on external markets; movement of peripheral workers determined largely by forces exogenous to the periphery; economic dependence reinforced by juridical, political, and military measures; relative lack of services and lower standard of living with higher frustration indicated by alcoholism and other social problems in the peripheral group; national discrimination on the basis of language, religion or other cultural forms (p. 33).

Hecter concludes by saying that "the aggregate economic differences between core and



periphery are causally linked to their cultural differences" (p. 34). From his perspective, this pattern of development has less to do with "automatic social structural or economic processes" per se than with the control that government policies exercise with regard to the allocation of resources (p. 34). He argues that because increased contact between core and periphery groups has not narrowed the economic gap between the two, that national development would be served by strengthening the political power of the peripheral group to change the distribution of resources to its benefit. In his view, political organization, based on a distinctive ethnic identity, is the way to achieve such power (p. 34).

Hechter points out that this model of internal colonialism is useful because it accounts for "backwardness in the midst of an industrial society", the "volatility of political integration", and suggests "an explanation for the resiliency of peripheral culture" (p. 34). Woven together, these three factors (economic, political, and cultural) accurately describe in a general way the situation Aboriginal peoples find themselves in today viz-a-viz mainstream Canadian society.

Williams, a geographer, examines the idea of internal colonialism as a way of developing a framework to understand "regional deprivation" in the context of debates concerning devolution of power from England to Scotland and particularly Wales (1977: 272). He offers the following definition:

The internal colonial model rests on a structure of domination and exploitation in social relations among heterogeneous distinct groups...In the 'colonial situation' this generally means domination by a racially and culturally different foreign conquering group, imposed on a materially inferior indigenous population. There is contact between the different cultures. The dominated society is condemned to an instrumental role by the metropolis... (p. 273).

Building on Hechter, he adds that internal colonialism can be seen as "a stage in the

underdevelopment-development continuum, and as such can be defined both by its position within such a sequence and also by forces which give rise to the development process" (p. 274). Two such forces identified are core/periphery relations and the progress of industrialization (p. 274). While these forces structure relations of inequality generally, Williams distinguishes internal colonialism from class structure

since colonialism is not only a relation of exploitation of the workers by the owners of raw materials...but also a relation and exploitation of a total population...by another population which also had distinct classes. Internal colonialism reveals many differences with the structure of classes, and sufficient difference with the city-country structure to be used as an analytic instrument (p. 274).

Although spurious to assume or impose a proto-class structure on Aboriginal social formations, the compounding of the pattern of uneven development in Canada with the enclaving of Aboriginal peoples on reserves as part of an internal colonial strategy does explain the distinct social and economic disadvantage Aboriginal peoples face compared to their rural or urban non-Aboriginal neighbours.

Blauner, writing in the late sixties, was one of the first to develop an analysis of internal colonialism and likely the first to apply it to U.S-Black relations. In particular, he explores Black protests at the time as collective responses to colonized status (1969: 393). Drawing heavily on Memmi's work *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Blauner distinguishes between colonialism as a social system (Memmi) and colonization as a process in order to "view our domestic situation as a special form of colonization outside a context of a colonial system" (p. 393).

In sketching some indicators of colonialism, Blauner viewed it as beginning with "a forced, involuntary entry" of a group into the dominant society on terms controlled by the

dominant society", which is "the crucial difference between the colonized Americans and the ethnic immigrant minorities" (p. 396). In this regard he stresses "the enormous fatefulness of the historical factor" in conceptualizing colonialism (p. 396). His indicators include a policy carried out by the colonial power that "constrains, transforms, or destroys indigenous values, orientations and ways of life; racism as a system of domination and justifying ideology (racism can exist without colonization but colonization does not exist without racism); and administration of the colonized by representatives of the dominant power, especially in such a way as to be "managed and manipulated by outsiders in terms of ethnic status" (p. 396).

While all four main features apply to the colonization of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, Blauner also addresses the special conditions under which colonization exists outside of a classic colonial structure:

The group culture and social structure of the colonized in America is less developed; it is also less autonomous. In addition, the colonized are a numerical minority, and furthermore they are ghettoized more totally and are more dispersed than people under classic colonialism. Though these realities affect the magnitude and direction of response, it is my basic thesis that the most important expressions of protest in the Black community during the recent years reflect the colonized status of Afro-America (p. 398).

While Aboriginal peoples in Canada constitute a numerical minority, are ghettoized on reserves and are more dispersed with regard to culture and social structure and its relative less autonomy viz-a-viz the dominant culture, the Canadian case fits the more classic pattern of colonialism; Aboriginal peoples maintained highly developed autonomous cultures and social structures that were deliberately targeted for destruction as part of State policy. In this regard, it is curious that Blauner overlooked the Native American experience in his analysis.

## **Canadian Colonialism**

As noted earlier, Ponting at times uses an internal colonial approach in addition to an inter-ethnic group analysis. With reference to internal colonialism he identifies the work of Blauner (1969) and Frideres (1983) and states that Frideres added certain refinements to Blauner's model (1986b: 85). These include the notion of indirect rule through "puppet chiefs", the exploitation of Indian labour, and the establishment of colour-based barriers to social mobilization (p. 85). In his small study of the relations between eight bands in Western Canada and a program administered by the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), Ponting developed eight empirical, micro-level indicators of behaviours that would fit the features of internal colonialism. However, in comparison to another micro-level case study involving non-ethnic government-client relations, he found that the behaviours were very similar. From this, he concluded:

In some respects those who continue to denounce DIA as a colonial apparatus are probably off-target in their criticism. That is not to say that reforms, indeed some sweeping reforms, are not warranted...What I am saying, though, is that more sophisticated explanatory models than the colonialism model need to be developed. Such models need to take into account social class considerations as well as bureaucratic, career, and organizational environment considerations (p. 103).

Frideres (1988), in response to Ponting, argues for developing a theoretical model of colonialism on the macro level:

By conceptualizing the reserve as an internal colony of a larger nation, it is possible to see beyond the individual factors involved in inter-group behaviour. While the individualized approach has offered much to the study of Native-White relations, it has not really produced any cogent explanation of those relations. Nor has it produced any meaningful improvement in the Native's position in our society. If anything, that position has worsened (1988: 366-367).

Moreover, Frideres discounts claims by social scientists who reject the colonial analysis on the basis that Canadian social and political patterns are significantly different than those in Africa or

India. While acknowledging differences, he reasserts "the fact that the indigenous peoples of Canada were unquestionably colonized and that their position in Canada today is a direct result of the colonization process" (p. 367).

In explaining colonialism in Canada and proposing solutions Frideres focuses on the political economy of Aboriginal peoples, positing a "parallel" economy in Canada, similar to Hechter's core/periphery analysis. In the Canadian case, this takes the form of high-tech barriers that prevent groups from entering the modern economy. Lacking the skills and resources, a culture of poverty results that "is almost impossible to get out (of)" (p. 373). As primary and secondary labour markets develop, the gap between the two widens with the result that "this segmented system promotes a dual labour market" (p. 373).

While internal colonialism acknowledges cultural difference, its explanations for the current demise of Aboriginal-Canadian relations focus almost exclusively on political economy. Economic exploitation is understood as the most salient factor for establishing and perpetuating internal colonization. As noted earlier, the point of political and social control is to extract economic reward (Frideres 1988:372).

Other variations view internal colonialism as paradigmatically a political issue (Emberley 1993:18). Boldt, Long, with Little Bear associate separate legal status under the Indian Act, special legislative programs, and specific land areas i.e. reserves, with internal colonialism (1984:70).

Puxley (1977) adds a psychological and ideological dimension to these structural analyses. Along the lines of Memmi although Memmi is not cited, Puxley states that "colonialism must be seen as an experience, and not simply a structural relationship. As such it

conditions both the colonizers and the colonized" (1977: 104). In thinking about the prerequisites for decolonization in the case of the Dene, he argues that the recognition of political and property rights and the removal of colonial structures and replacement by independent Dene institutions although necessary, will not be enough to eliminate the psychology of colonialism which can easily result in neo-colonialism. In his view, development involves the shattering of illusions and willingness of all parties to recognize how colonialism predetermines a "dialogue of the deaf" where "one side does the talking while the other is to all intents and purposes presumed to be mute" (p. 118).

Dyck (1991) exposes the ideological foundations of colonialism through his deconstruction of "the Indian problem" as one of persisting "coerced tutelage" on the part of the Canadian State - the institutionalization of an involuntary, ideological and legal wardship imposed on a captive population (p. 24-33). He also examines the passive and active forms Aboriginal resistance has taken throughout this history. Dyck explains the dynamics of coerced tutelage as comprising not only material interests but also a system of political relations, ideological claims and moral purposes on the part of the Canadian State, located and understood within their historical context (p. 29).

Kulchyski (1988) has provided the most sophisticated analysis of Aboriginal-Canadian relations to date using an internal colonial framework. Employing the concepts of "dispossession" and "totalisation", Kulchyski argues that Aboriginal peoples as the dispossessed "are not oppressed by and in struggle with capital directly but rather are directly oppressed by the State as a totalizing power" (1988: abstract). In centering the role of the State, Kulchyski does not diminish the role of capital but distinguishes it from previous analyses which focus on the

economic exploitation of Aboriginal peoples as one of the ongoing extraction of economic surplus primarily through labour. In this respect, he would question Frideres' analysis of dual labour markets and Ponting's assertion that class should be a central category. From within an Aboriginal worldview, land, with its multiple meanings, uses and set of relations (economic, political, social, cultural, and spiritual), is of primary importance. Kulchyski's analysis of colonialism proceeds from connecting land to dispossession and totalization:

The fact of dispossession implies loss: loss of land, loss of social place, loss ultimately of a meaning sense of self. The act of dispossession, then, is the process of taking away land and destroying the cultural and economic bases of a distinct social identity. The act of dispossession has two moments or two strategies: a strategy of marginalisation or exclusion that dispossesses people by effacing cultural difference. The oppression of Native peoples cannot be understood in terms of systematic economic exploitation on the model of working class domination. Oppression or domination in this context is understood as the attempt by the dominant social system to dispossess a specific social group and ultimately erase all traces of difference...preventing a specific social group, Native people, from achieving their objective of negotiating a position of gatherer-hunters in the modern world (p.280).

The two forces responsible for these acts of dispossession are capital and the capitalist state "because they act as totalising powers" (p. 281). Kulchyski focuses on the role of the State viz-a-viz capital as an undertheorized area in Aboriginal-Canadian relations. Building on Poulantzas, Kulchyski states

The State attempts to construct, entrench and reproduce the modern nation by imposing capitalist space and time, territory and history, on a territorially defined social collectivity (1992: 176).

From this perspective, the withdrawal of the White Paper did not mark "a shift of State policy so much as a shift in State strategy (where) assimilation remained the policy goal" (1988: 270):

The period since then might better be characterized in terms of the State's attempts to confine, restrict and focus Native demands for self-government and aboriginal rights in a fashion that might...also serve the process of assimilation (p. 270).

As Kulchyski notes, the picture would be bleak if the State and capital remained unopposed forces. Kulchyski points to various forms of Aboriginal resistance to totalization, which in their subversivity involve

constructing enclaves of culture within the established order, of finding space in the interstices of power, of controlling the pace and nature of links with the dominant social organization and culture, of adapting Western technology to precapitalist social relations, of taking the tools offered by the State and capital and using them to strengthen rather than destroy primitive culture (1992: 177-178).

Kulchyski uses the term "primitive" not in its negative connotation but as "a conceptual tool in understanding Native politics in Canada today" (p. 193). Such peoples and cultures pose a threat to the modern world, to the State and capital, in that they "represent the possibility of egalitarian gender and social relations, of generalized affluence, of nonalienated labour" (p. 192-193).

Historically, Aboriginal peoples have rejected Marxist ideas, particularly the notions of progress and proletarianization (Bedford 1994). The discourse of historical materialism has also been viewed as problematic; by relegating Aboriginal knowledge to the realm of ideology, it is discounted as a legitimate system of knowledge (McIsaac 1995). Holmes (1996) has critiqued the strengths and limitations of Marxist frameworks in relation to Indigenous worldviews, cosmology and conceptions of social change. In the following, she draws a compelling picture of that difference with respect to political economy and Hawaiian epistemology:

In the Hawaiian corpus, knowledge emanates from forces that lie outside human agency to generate social change. In contrast Marx and Engels present their own grounded epistemology and accompanying cosmology, in which social change is generated solely through human agency. In the Hawaiian corpus, political/social history has spiritual dimensions that collapse into cosmology. For Marx and Engels, cosmology and political/social history emanate from economic relations of production. The spiritual dimension proceeds from the material dimension. In terms of human relations, the Hawaiian corpus relates identity to lineage and blood. In the literature of political economy, human activity is produced via social



and symbolic structures, which emerge as individuals produce the conditions of their existence (in press).

She offers the following positive assessment of Kulchyski's work:

Kulchyski's formulation puts pre-capitalist communities in the privileged position of resisting capital. While Marx's formulation seems to posit labor in opposition to capital, Kulchyski appropriates Marx's words and inferences to posit indigeneity in opposition to capital (1996:139).

In recognizing and incorporating the content of Aboriginal cultural difference, Kulchyski avoids the weaknesses of those who reduce an analysis of internal colonialism to political economy or those who, using ethnicity frameworks, recognize the fact of cultural difference without taking into account the relevance of its content.

In this regard, I view Kulchyski's analysis of Aboriginal-Canadian relations as an example of Fraser's more broadly-based socialist alternative which calls for a closer working of the politics of recognition with the politics of distribution. The difference lies in recognizing the specificity of relations constructed through internal colonialism. In this respect, analyses of internal colonialism can have high explanatory power. As noted in Chapter One, when culture and socio-economic explanations are integrated within the overarching conceptual and historical link of colonialism (RCAP 1996c: 46-47), they also serve to lessen the gap between Aboriginal and Western thinkers.

In the next chapter, I discuss the implications of the Western philosophical dilemma of difference and the current conceptual frameworks presented here. The resulting paradigm muddle in terms of Canadian-Aboriginal relations becomes more apparent when the Aboriginal philosophical perspectives presented in the first chapter are incorporated into the discussion.

## ENDNOTES

### 1. Kymlicka states:

Liberalism is said to be incomplete or inapplicable for a number of reasons: some claim that the aboriginal population has special rights because their ancestors were here first (Cardinal 1969; Dene Nation; Robinson and Quinney); others claim that Indians and Inuit are properly viewed as 'peoples' under international law, and so have the right of self-determination (Sanders 1983a pp.21-5; Robinson and Quinney pp. 141-2; L.C. Green p. 346); some claim that aboriginal peoples have a different value system, emphasizing the community rather than the individual, and hence group rights rather than individual rights (Ponting and Gibbins 1986 p. 216); Little Bear, Boldt and Long p. xvi; Svensson pp. 451-2); yet others suggest that aboriginal communities *themselves* have certain rights, because groups as well as individuals have legitimate moral claims (Boldt and Long 1985b pp. 343-5). These are all common ways of defending aboriginal rights against liberalism, by locating our intuitions in favour of them in some non-liberal theory of rights or values (1988: 153).

### 2. Fraser states that she aims "not to reflect the "post-socialist" condition symptomatically, but rather to reflect on it critically (1997:1). She summarizes the defining features in the following:

This, then, is the "post-socialist" condition: an absence of any credible overarching emancipatory project despite the proliferation of fronts of struggle; a general decoupling of the cultural politics of recognition from the social politics of redistribution; and a decentering of claims for equality in the face of aggressive marketization and sharply rising material inequality (p.3).

### 3. Deconstruction in Fraser's terms means the "deep restructuring of relations of recognition" which "destabilizes group differentiation" (1997:27). She applies the term specifically to gender and race relations. In terms of race relations, she critiques liberal affirmative action strategies:

Affirmative recognition to redress racial injustice in the culture includes cultural nationalism, the effort to assure people of colour respect by revaluing "blackness," while leaving unchanged the binary black-white code that gives the latter its sense...It does not attack the racialized division of exploitable and surplus labor, nor the racialized division of menial and nonmenial occupations within paid labor. Leaving intact the deep structures that generate racial disadvantage, it must make surface allocations again and again. The result is not only to underline racial differentiation; it is also to mark people of color as deficient and insatiable, as always needing more and more. Thus, they too can be cast as privileged recipients of special treatment (p.30).

In contrast, transformative recognition in the culture "consists of anti-racist deconstruction aimed

at dismantling Eurocentricism by destabilizing racial dichotomies" (p.31).

4. The only explicit statement I am aware of in Weaver's body of work where she addresses the issue of the content of Aboriginal identity is in the following:

In this paper I am concerned only with the processes within the federal governments that shape and influence their definitions of aboriginal ethnicity. I do not ignore aboriginal peoples' definitions of their own ethnicity but I do not examine how and why these definitions developed within their political movements (1984:183).

In this paper and others, she states the fact of ethnicity without exploring the relevance of its content.

5. It is interesting to note in this regard that the first Canadian government to politically recognize the inherent right of Aboriginal peoples to self-government, also questioned the absolute sovereignty of the state. In making that announcement in October, 1990, Premier Bob Rae of Ontario stated: "No sovereignty in the world is absolute today. It is all relative. We are looking for a Constitution in which every Canadian can look into the constitutional mirror and see his or her reflection" (cited in Cassidy 1991:155).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Implications for Aboriginal-Canadian Relations**

#### **Introduction**

The creation of a new relationship in terms of Aboriginal-Canadian relations depends on dialogue not soliloquy. Several useful insights emerge from the review of various conceptualizations of Aboriginal-Canadian relations presented in Chapters One and Two which have implications for the establishment of a dialogue. Those insights also help to clarify the current paradigm muddle which pertains to the Canadian state in its relations with Aboriginal peoples. When posed with the Aboriginal vision of co-existence, what is reflected back is a liberalism in crisis with respect to the dual issues of cultural difference and shared power. Nonetheless, by exploiting this muddle, Aboriginal peoples have made significant gains in this period.

As a non-Aboriginal Canadian, I am centrally concerned with the role of the Canadian state in that dialogue. However, I want to discuss that role in a balanced way which includes Aboriginal perspectives where they are available or my interpretation and understanding of those perspectives. In this chapter, I want to make explicit the existing tensions at the philosophical and conceptual level in order to draw out the implications for dialogue at the policy level. In the first part of this chapter I review the tensions between Aboriginal and liberal visions and the tensions between Aboriginal conceptualizations and the two predominant Western conceptual frameworks. Given the inadequacies of liberal philosophy and current Western conceptual frameworks I ask whether there are alternative explanations which can move the West beyond its

current assumptions to address the possibility of co-existence.

On that basis I proceed to an examination and discussion of postmodern positions in relation to Aboriginal epistemology and Aboriginal critiques of Western knowledge. Relying on the work of Leonard (1997), what emerges from this discussion is a tentative ethical framework from Western perspectives which provides a basis in terms of respect for difference and shared power to engage in dialogue with Aboriginal partners seeking co-existence on those grounds. I conclude this chapter by imagining how such a dialogue could occur in the context of joint policy-making.

### **Aboriginal and Liberal Visions**

At the level of worldviews and visions, it is evident that two opposed value systems and epistemologies have given way to two distinct visions of Aboriginal-Canadian relations: co-existence, understood as self-rule and shared rule within Canada, and limited autonomy within a culturally pluralist, liberal framework subject to the control and regulation of the Canadian state.

In terms of philosophical and conceptual approaches, it is further evident that liberal, cultural pluralist frameworks impact Aboriginal-Canadian relations in two crucial ways: they mask and deny colonialism and they reduce difference to diversity. This repeats the colonial dynamic in a modern form. First, in masking colonialism or treating it as an artifact, a shared history is denied. In denying a shared history, Aboriginal peoples are, in effect, excluded from history. Two stories remain with no shared stories. Secondly, in denying the relevance of the content of Aboriginal difference and reducing it to a homogenized cultural diversity, Aboriginality is suppressed or subordinated within a hegemonic paradigm. Aboriginal peoples

are excluded from participation in Canadian society as Aboriginal peoples. I view this continuing erasure and subordination of Aboriginal peoples as the dynamic of assimilation operating in a new guise despite its official rejection. On these grounds, there is little hope for meaningful dialogue.

In my view, this ongoing tension is a fundamentally philosophical one based on the nature of difference itself. The limitedness of liberal philosophy as found in current articulations of cultural pluralism cannot provide for a co-equal existence with Aboriginal peoples. To do so would challenge the unitary nature of the State and the power of the State itself. The contradiction articulated by Levin (1993) asserts itself: liberalism espouses the self-determination of nation-states but not the self-determination of communities within those states (p. 4). Diversity may be embraced under the hegemony of the Canadian state but a thorough recognition and acceptance of Aboriginal difference cannot be countenanced under current constructions of liberalism.

Liberal cultural pluralist frameworks which recognize diversity but not difference stand in marked contrast to Aboriginal philosophy where diversity is understood in the context of difference. As seen in Chapter One through the teachings of the Medicine Wheel and Dockstator's analysis, the integrity of each society must be preserved in order that the whole of society on the planet be sustained. As distinct from Western ethnocentrism, there is no propensity to force others to assimilate to Aboriginal cultures or to be assimilated by other cultures. The ethic of non-interference as symbolized in two-row wampum belts and covenant chains embodies this respect for difference and mitigates against such coercion which would result in societal chaos. Yet this respect for difference does not mean a retreat into isolationism.

The interdependence of all peoples and peoples with the environment is the central principle guiding this vision of co-existence. As Dockstator forcefully argues, this philosophical foundation provides for a separate existence based on self-rule *and* for mutual relations based on respect for difference.

Much critique by Aboriginal authors is directed towards the foundations of modern Western thought as expressed in the Enlightenment in order to expose the roots of Western ethnocentrism in its lack of respect for difference. In doing so, the argument is not so much a challenge to the principles of Western society, which would be disrespectful, but rather a challenge that we have not lived up to our principles in the way we deal with Aboriginal peoples. The refrain of "broken treaties, broken promises" echoes this sentiment. In effect, the critique is that despite its seeming concern with justice, Western law has little to do with what is right, fair, reasonable or equitable, all basic liberal principles (William Henderson 1985: 222). In terms of political theory, for example, James Youngblood Henderson (1985) provides a thorough critique of the foundations of European law found in liberalism and of the principles which have not been applied in dealings with Aboriginal peoples. He concludes that:

In its approach to the rights of native peoples the law becomes tyranny at worst and an ineffective apologist as best. The Canadian governments may call it law, but it is racism. It is not founded on the principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law (p. 220).

Other Aboriginal thinkers critique the ethnocentrism present in European portrayals of history read as History. Seneca scholar John Mohawk (1992a), who has examined extensively the ideas and origins of Western civilization, writes that the doctrine of "discovery", for example, was "simply a theory of the right of exploitation" by the military states of Europe (p. 27-28). As a

foundation of the modern inter-state system it enabled "the nation-states of the world (to) agree to recognize each other's rights over and against the numerous peoples of the world" (p. 28). The case remains the same today: "indigenous peoples have no rights to exist as distinct peoples under international law" (p. 28). In terms of the effect of this doctrine on how History has been constructed, Mohawk states:

The obvious fiction of a "discovery" of lands occupied by millions of people for tens of thousands of years underscores the ethnocentrism evident in most historical accounts...The idea of "discovery" tends to render invisible all that existed in the Americas prior to 1492, including the peoples who occupied those places. World history, as told by Western historians, has until recently been the story of the evolution to modernity of European-originating societies...The existence and previous histories of the American Indians similarly are not part of the story of the triumph of the West and are therefore relegated to a status of exotic and more or less irrelevant digressions (p. 15-16).

This critique of ethnocentrism extends to representations of the Aboriginal peoples in history by non-Aboriginal academics. Berkhofer (1979), Lyons (1992), and Mohawk (1992b) in the U.S. and Francis (1992) in Canada have deconstructed the idea and images of "the Indian" as a European invention. Particularly in the U.S. what has emerged from these accounts is a different reading of history than that of conquerors and conquered. Based on a recognition of cultural sharing and mutual influence in the early contact period, American Indian cultures influenced and even inspired colonists' ideas concerning democracy and forms of governance (Mohawk & Lyons 1992). Robert Williams (1997) has written a very thorough and convincing account based on treaty and archival research which reinforces that thesis.

What emerges from this discussion so far is a critique of the knowledge/power relationship on the part of Aboriginal writers with respect to the issues of representation and history. The denial of an authentic difference and identity masked by ethnocentricism lies at the



heart of this critique. The discourse and practices which issue from Western ethnocentrism are rooted not only in Enlightenment conceptions of thought (progress, civility, rationality) but are read back to forms of elitism, hierarchy, utopianism interpreted by the West to be the roots of its civilization (Mohawk 1992c). As the projection and rationalization of conquest and domination of Aboriginal peoples by Western elites, this analysis is echoed by Kulchyski's (1988) analysis of dispossession in its multiple dimensions which Aboriginal peoples have experienced through the propensity of the State to totalize and homogenize.

### **Aboriginal and Western Conceptual Frameworks**

While the fact of Aboriginal difference is recognized by many non-Aboriginal Canadian analysts, as evident in Chapter Two, the content of that difference is for the most part not integrated into their analyses. Although the fact of recognizing Aboriginal difference by means of ethnicity or internal colonialism approaches can open the dialogue, it just as quickly assures its failure. Without an understanding and willingness to engage the content of Aboriginal difference, Western understandings remain partial and hegemonic; a destructive combination that fuels ethnocentrism. Aboriginal demands in the context of such dialogue continue to be interpreted through Western frameworks and concepts such as "ethnic minority", "visible minority", "class", "nation-state" "sovereignty" "self-government". Thus, Aboriginal peoples are rarely heard or understood on their own terms.

As discussed in Chapter Two, neither ethnicity nor internal colonialism as approaches to conceptualizing Aboriginal-Canadian relations deals effectively with Aboriginal difference. Aboriginal analysts reject ethnicity as an overarching concept because it does not distinguish

between the interests and claims of immigrant groups and those of the original inhabitants and their descendants who occupy a unique subject position with a unique history in Canada. For this reason, it is highly inappropriate and misleading to compare Aboriginal resistance to that of the Quebecois struggle for independence or to the claims of groups labelled "visible minorities". While Aboriginal rights are now recognized in the Constitution, those unique rights have not been defined and are far from being respected or fulfilled. In this context, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996b) cautions against the re-enactment of reducing Aboriginal difference to the status of a minority group or other interest group in Canada (p. 252).

While the ahistorical dimension of ethnicity approaches to Aboriginal difference is overcome in the explanations of internal colonialism, the latter also remains problematic. The primacy of the economy and the use of historical materialist analysis provide cogent explanations of colonialism in Western terms but do not adequately address colonialism from Aboriginal perspectives. As evident in Chapter One, Aboriginal writers like Dockstator adopt a view which encapsulates colonization in a much broader history which does not begin with European contact as most non-Aboriginal writers write it. As the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996b) has tried to correct, it begins long before in the histories of the distinct nations and peoples before contact.<sup>1</sup> Aboriginal history on this continent is still labelled "pre-history" or "proto-history" by Marxist and non-Marxists writers alike, the implication being that from Western perspectives Aboriginal peoples are "without history" (Wolf 1982).<sup>2</sup>

While Aboriginal writers acknowledge a materialist dimension to history, history and its effects are always related to cosmology because that cosmology is implicated in Aboriginal ways of being and knowing. For example, in her critique of colonialism, Turpel (1993b), works from a

wholistic perspective to describe a web of interconnected effects as Aboriginal peoples have experienced them. The economy is only one of many factors which collectively explain the cultural and spiritual harm that has been done:

...Aboriginal peoples' issues are seemingly indivisible - one crosses over to another in an interconnected and almost continuous fashion. Alcoholism in Aboriginal communities is connected to unemployment. Unemployment is connected to the denial of hunting, trapping and gathering economic practices. The loss of hunting and trapping is connected to dispossession of land and the impact of major development projects. Dispossession of land is in turn connected to loss of cultural and spiritual identity and is a manifestation of bureaucratic control over all aspects of life. This oppressive web can be seen as one of disempowerment of communities and individual Aboriginal citizens (p.166).

This type of social analysis, which is comprehensive and inclusive of all dimensions of the human experience as Aboriginal peoples, stands in contrast to and I believe in tension with Western epistemologies which privilege one dimension, whether social, cultural, political or economic, over another through specialized knowledges. In terms of internal colonialism, culture as a whole suffers when the economy or any other factor is made a primary explanation. As observed in Chapter One, the tendency in the West to "add-on" factors as a way of resolving these differences fails to apprehend the basic difference being expressed from a non-Western perspective through a qualitatively different framework.

### **Aboriginal and Postmodern Positions**

Given the inadequacies of liberal philosophy and current conceptual frameworks to recognize and interact with the content of Aboriginal difference, the question arises as to whether there are other explanations which can move the West beyond colonial assumptions to address the possibility of co-existence in terms of both cultural difference and hegemonic power

relations? Postmodern perspectives suggest themselves because they provide both a critique of modernist discourse and an analysis of modernity as a historical period in Western culture.<sup>3</sup> While my focus here will be on the postmodern critique of Western epistemology, I do not believe it can be divorced from the reality of modernity as a crucial phase in Western history; a phase which brought forth the liberal nation-state, capitalism and colonialism. Given both the difficulty of the language of postmodernism and the complexity of its conceptual constructions, I will follow primarily Leonard's (1997) rendering of it. My intent is not to engage in a full consideration of postmodernism but rather to sketch out some main elements of the critique and the potential option postmodernism provides as it relates to this discussion here.

Expressed most simply by Lyotard as "an incredulity towards metanarratives" (Harvey 1989: 45), postmodernism represents a complex rupture with Enlightenment thought upon which the modern (Western) worldview is based. The intellectual belief in the power of reason over ignorance, order over disorder and science over superstition as universal values provided the foundation for a transformed social order which included capitalism as a new mode of production (Leonard 1997: 5-6). Through the application of these beliefs, humanity would progress and history would become the telling of that linear progression of human achievement. Leonard references the Kantian notions of the "historical present" as the ground for establishing a philosophy of knowledge and "autonomous reason", with its ability to establish its own norms and laws independent of past tradition, as in principle available to all humanity and therefore, universal (p.6). He states:

Thus 'Enlightenment Reason' becomes universal in its claims to be the means by which knowledge is created as well as the standard against which knowledge is validated...Cultural relativity did not enter into these claims, they were universal,

certain and objective; they came to represent Truth (p.6).

It is the failure of these metanarratives to produce the promised emancipation of humanity that has led some thinkers to reject them: "Postmodernists argue that modernity has represented in practice, a Eurocentric, patriarchal and destructive triumphalism over populations and over nature itself" (p.7). They argue against modernity's self-validating knowledge claims which turn human subjects into objects and legitimate the power of those who know, while denying power "to those *who do not know* what reason and science has discovered" (p. 8-9).

Through his excavation of the social practices surrounding madness, delinquency and sexuality, Foucault revealed how the discourses of the scientific disciplines and their use by the emergent nation-state were "immersed in processes of domination legitimated in the language of science, order and truth" (p.7). Under a single concept of truth and its categorical separation from the false, rules of exclusion operate in these discourses to ensure the invisibility of subordinate claims to truth (p.7). The unmasking of binary categories as seemingly opposed terms reveals a socially constructed hierarchy embedded in language where one term is always superior in relation to the other (*we/they, colonizer/colonized, culture/nature, white/native, male/female* etc.). Leonard comments that

These dividing categorizations are essentially forms of division between "us" and "them", between normative and deviant, between order and disorder, and ultimately between what is valued as superior and what is devalued as inferior (p.17).

This thinking in dichotomous, opposed ways fails to acknowledge relations of interdependence between the terms and the subjects involved - one would not exist without the other. Language and what language represents then is at the heart of the postmodern critique of Western

epistemology. In terms of modernity's knowledge claims, language is meant to provide "accurate representation of an objective social world" (p. 9). Postmodernists undermine this authority to know with such certainty by positing that "the criterion of 'truth' is entirely internal to discourses within cultures and the 'real' exists only insofar as there is a discourse which describes it" (p.10). In this sense, following Derrida, there is meaning in language but that meaning is never stable or fixed:

Because meaning is continually slipping away from us, there can be no essential, certain meanings, only different meanings emerging from different experiences, especially the experiences of those who have been excluded from discourses, whose voices and whose writing have been silenced (Leonard 1997: 10).

In this respect, as a critique from within Western epistemology, postmodernists deconstruct the connection between power, knowledge and the constitution of subjects in order to provide an emancipatory space for formerly excluded voices, including colonized peoples. Western cultural norms are relativized and a politics of difference emerges from the rejection of a politics of sameness understood as assimilation and homogenization under a hegemonic liberal paradigm. In terms of Aboriginal-Canadian relations, Leonard applies a postmodern analysis to colonial racist discourse:

Western cultural discourse attempts both to distance itself from the Other (non-Western cultures) by fixing its subordinate place and the identities of its populations, and at the same time 'strives to capture an otherness it conceptualizes as wild, chimeric, excessive and unknowable. Such an ambivalence allows colonial discourse to claim for itself always already to know its object, precisely in its recalcitrant inscrutability', writes Venn (pp. 48, 49), commenting on Bhabha (1983). In this dominant colonial discourse, the Other, the 'native' of subordinated cultures, is domesticated by exclusion, internalizes herself as Other and can only achieve 'progress' by becoming 'white' through acculturation, through renouncing the culture of the Other. The process of 'passing' for white, either physically or symbolically, is a recurrent feature of white societies, illustrated most powerfully,

perhaps, in the late stages of the colonization of North America. It is within recent memory and experience for example that Aboriginal children were removed from their families and communities and sent to residential schools so that they could be separated from the 'backwardness' of native cultures and educated into a new identity, that of 'Canadians' (p.18).

There is obviously deep resonance here between postmodernism as Western self-criticism and Aboriginal critiques of Western ethnocentrism and its roots. Leonard endorses the argument "that we cannot know the 'reality' of the history of racism and colonialism when the discourses, the 'texts' of this history are those of the European conquerors and exploiters" (p.17).

In this sense, postmodernists provide cogent analyses of the discourses and discursive practices which inform, reinforce and maintain ethnocentrism in given periods of history which are useful for understanding the forces and practices of state policies of assimilation in their various guises. In doing so, postmodern analysis helps to create spaces in Western thought for Aboriginal peoples to reclaim and constitute their own multiple identities as Aboriginal peoples. Postmodernism does so on the grounds of difference. Fixed identities of people determined by singular Western norms of truth (essentialism) are deconstructed to reveal a complex subjectivity of differences that is dynamic and thus ever slipping away. To use Foucault's term, heterotopia or a world of differences characterizes the epistemological shift from modern to postmodern. By heterotopia, Foucault means "the co-existence in an 'impossible space' of a 'large number of fragmentary possible worlds' or more simply, incommensurable spaces that are juxtaposed or superimposed upon each other" (Harvey 1989:48). This shift in turn valorizes resistance to any authoritative naming.

A number of questions arise at this point with respect to the implications of postmodernism as a vehicle for conceptualizing Aboriginal-Canadian co-existence based on a

respect for difference. Does postmodern discourse lead towards the emancipation or towards the fragmentation of Aboriginal being in relation to the Western world? Asked in another way, what does the epistemological shift to heterotopia accomplish for excluded Others? What kind of alternative to modernism (including liberalism and socialism) does postmodernism represent? Is deconstruction an end in itself or can it lead to reconstructed social relations? And in particular, can it lead to reconstructed Aboriginal-Canadian social relations?

Lather (1991) provides a useful distinction to see our way through these questions. She distinguishes between a postmodernism of reaction and a postmodernism of resistance. The postmodernism of reaction is described as the "neo-Nietzschean collapse of meaning, nihilism, schizo-cynicism; cultural whirlpool of Baudrillardian simulacra" (p.160). She defines the postmodernism of resistance as:

participatory, dialogic & pluralistic structures of authority. Non-dualistic, anti-hierarchical. Uprising of ex-centrics. Multiple sites from which the world is spoken...(p. 160).

The dissolving of meta-narratives in the postmodernism of reaction theoretically leads to new space for "the subaltern to speak" (Spivak 1988) in a postmodernism of resistance. Space is created for suppressed voices formerly encompassed by the totalization of modern thought to resist homogenization. Most Western writers who are critical of postmodernism agree with Harvey (1989) that the most liberative and appealing aspect of postmodernism is its concern with 'otherness':

The idea that all groups have a right to speak for themselves, in their own voice, and have that voice accepted as authentic and legitimate is essential to the pluralist stance of postmodernism (p. 48).



However, it is in establishing this equality of difference that postmodernism seems to undermine itself. Unable to reach for a meta-narrative beyond heterotopia, itself a universal which reifies difference, the postmodernism of reaction borders on nihilism. As Harvey states, "they can only end in condemning their own validity claims to the point where nothing remains of any basis for reasoned action" (p.116). From Harvey's perspective, what began as emancipatory ends up being disempowering and dangerous:

Worst of all, while it opens up a radical prospect by acknowledging the authenticity of other voices, postmodernist thinking immediately shuts off those other voices from access to more universal sources of power by ghettoizing them within an opaque otherness, the specificity of this or that language game. It thereby disempowers those voices (of women, ethnic and racial minorities, colonized peoples, the unemployed, youth, etc.) in a world of lop-sided power relations...The rhetoric of postmodernism is dangerous for it avoids confronting the realities of political economy and the circumstances of global power (p.117).

Because the issue of structural power is avoided, an equality of difference constituted on postmodern grounds would appear to hold no greater prospect for Aboriginal peoples than an equality of sameness founded on liberal principles. In particular, some feminists have observed an underlying ambivalence in postmodernism with respect to the politics of identity which has emerged in relation to the focus on difference in postmodernism. Brown (1994) states:

On the one hand its attention to difference has contributed to the development of a politics based upon identity. On the other hand, postmodern anti-essentialism rejects identity politics and the hierarchy of oppression, which have become the dominant response to the theoretical and political issues of difference (p. 35).

Because feminist postmodernism rejects the totalizing and hegemonic discourses of modern thought what it offers feminism is a new emphasis on inclusion, diversity, and representation as expressed through the multiplicity of women's identities (p.36). The critique of postmodernism

by some feminists lies not in the self-criticism of the need for inclusion and diversity but rather in what some perceive to be the creation of a new universal truth based on that diversity. Brown states succinctly that "focusing only on the other as different is as problematic as only focusing on sameness" (p.42). In this regard Bordo (1990) offers the clearest critique of feminists who have adopted a postmodernist stance. She states that feminist/postmodern union over difference

has contributed to the development of a new feminist "methodologism" which lays claims to an authoritative critical framework, legislating "correct" and "incorrect" approaches to theorizing identity, history, and culture...it also often implicitly (and mistakenly) supposes that the adoption of a "correct" theoretical approach makes it possible to avoid ethnocentrism (p.136).

Bordo does not take issue with the postmodern recognition of "interpretative multiplicity" per se; rather, she critiques the hegemonizing of this concept which ultimately dissolves gender and thus, "woman" as a category:

From this perspective, the template of gender is criticized for its fixed, binary structuring of reality and is replaced with a narrative ideal of ceaseless textual play. But this ideal, I will argue, while arising out of a critique of modernist epistemological pretensions to adequately represent reality, remains animated by its own fantasies of attaining an epistemological perspective free of the locatedness and limitations of embodied existence - a fantasy that I call a "dream of everywhere" (p.136).

Bordo's ultimate concern in making these criticisms is that such a fantasy is dangerous politically as well as theoretically, with the potential to disempower, depoliticize, and dehistoricize current struggles against patriarchy and other forms of structured inequality (p.142).

This feminist critique of postmodernism has implications for other people excluded as groups in Western societies. As noted in Chapter Two, Fraser states with respect to a deconstructive anti-essentialism as part of the solution for Aboriginal peoples, that "certainly

bivalent collectivities of indigenous peoples do not seek to put themselves out of business as groups (1997: n.45, p.39). As if in response, Smith (1999), writing from a Maori perspective, states:

**While the West might be experiencing fragmentation, the process of fragmentation known under its older guise as colonization is well known to indigenous peoples. We can talk about the fragmentation of lands and cultures. We know what it is like to have our identities regulated by laws and our languages and our customs removed from our lives. Fragmentation is not an indigenous project, it is something we are recovering from. While shifts are occurring in the ways in which indigenous peoples put ourselves back together again, the greater project is about recentring indigenous identities on a larger scale (p. 97).**

In responding to the criticism that postmodernists, and Foucault in particular, fail to provide for a politics of effective change on postmodern epistemological grounds, Wang (1999) believes that an important understanding is often missed. He argues that subjectivity in relation to power and not power per se is Foucault's main project:

**By centering the subject in a web of power/resistance, Foucault proposes a dialectic relationship between power and resistance. Neither side has total control over the other. Individuals are neither as free in exercising their individual will as liberalism suggests, nor are their actions totally determined and constrained by their locations within the broader social relations as suggested in neo-Marxist structuralist thinking (189-190).**

Wang contends that by overlooking Foucault's notions of subjectivity and resistance, Foucault's concept of disciplinary power is misread as total power, "which leads to a conclusion that escape is impossible and society can never be free from power and oppression" (1999: 190). This is a misreading because in Foucault's terms power is both productive and relational in character. Against coercive forms of power, Wang states that in Foucault's view "power functions best not by directly imposing force on people but by indirectly constituting the subjectivity of the individuals" (1999: 191). In this regard, power can construct and give shape to our identities yet

can do so only through our active participation. Thus, power is not just coercive but also can be seen as relational:

The need for our engagement implies that power has a relational character. Our total or partial refusal to participate or to participate in a way that is not expected by power is a sign of resistance. Therefore, power is not something to be possessed; instead, it is a phenomenon that is exercised in social relations. Foucault uses the relational character of power to develop his notion of resistance and argues against the possibility of total control through power (p. 192).

While there is no escaping power because we are always "inside it" in Foucault's terms, because of its relational character we are not without power. It is up to our selves to exercise "disciplinary" power through our own subjectivity.

With respect to the social relations of power in Foucault's thought, Wang makes a further clarification which is also important here. While we seemingly have progressed from coercive forms of power (wars, use of force and violence) to dealing with conflict through the democratic procedures of politics, "Foucault reminds us that power did not disappear; instead it has become more subtle and delicate (p. 192)." Wang connects the subtlety of power in the modern state to Foucault's notion of discourses. He states:

...Similarly, the institutionalization of modern democratic politics does not represent an equal distribution of political power but in fact a transformation of forms of power from the physical armed force of premodern wars to the disciplinary power of the modern state...Instead, this form of power takes the form of politics, which seeks to maximize its effects and minimize alternative outcomes by inciting individuals to participate in its discourse...Only through discourses can we understand who we are and what is real...Foucault views discourses as media of power relations...He sees discourse as a practice embedded in social relations rather than as a group of statements circulating in our daily language" (p. 192).

Recalling the dialectic between power and resistance, discourse as practice is a double-edged sword. Herein lies the key to the possibilities for change: "Discourse transmits and produces

power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (Foucault 1978: 101, cited in Wang 1999: 193). Thus, the deconstruction of discourses, the tracing of their genealogies and an understanding of their dividing practices become important technologies in exercising resistance and creating subjectivity.

From this reading of Foucault, deconstruction takes on a certain dynamic quality due to Foucault's insights about the technologies of power and his use of dialectics. Discourses constructed as social relations and practices both reinforce and reveal the conditions of oppression and possibilities for change in specific contexts. As a strategy, I find this form of analysis very useful in that it historicizes and contextualizes under what conditions certain claims can be made. Revealing the microprocesses of power operating within specific social configurations is an important strategic movement. Such strategies constitute the *modus operandi* that would allow for reconstructive possibilities within a postmodern framework understood to be based on a non-teleological epistemology.

Considering these differing views on the openings and closures of postmodernist possibilities, and Foucault's understanding of power and subjectivity in particular, where does this leave us in terms of politics? In the case of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, it is important to keep in mind that coercive forms of power have not disappeared under democracy. The worst excesses of coercion and anti-democratic practice have occurred precisely in this century under a liberal democratic ethos. We are still in a state of internal colonialism. Thus, an analysis of the structural dynamics of internal colonialism and particularly in this case the role of the State in sustaining colonialism is valid if incomplete. Critical theorists (Kulchyski 1988; Shewell 1995) have begun to deconstruct those discourses that have served to legitimate unjust, unfair, and

inhumane policies and practices. These deconstructions particularly on the part of non-Aboriginal academics can be seen as a necessary part of a decolonization project, particularly for those positioned as colonizers who resist. However, as Smith (1999) reminds us from an Aboriginal perspective:

In a decolonizing framework, deconstruction is part of a much larger intent. Taking apart the story, revealing underlying texts, and giving voice to things that are often known intuitively does not help people to improve their current conditions. It provides words, perhaps, an insight that explains certain experiences - but it does not prevent someone from dying (p.3).

In this context I do not view Foucault's form of analysis as offering an effective political alternative that could be called "post-colonial". As an epistemological framework that is non-teleological, any vision of "post-colonial" understood as "after colonialism" would mean support for a new meta-narrative. However, if understood in the way he may have intended, Foucault offers a way of thinking strategically in relation to power that enables us to see the dynamics of power operating in relations between the colonizer and the colonized, in both their constructive and destructive dimensions. I think this form of analysis is useful because it engages us in the complexity that does reflect the state of Aboriginal-Canadian relations today. Foucault's methodology helps us to understand the meaning of "post-colonial" in a second sense, as an ongoing critique of colonial and neo-colonial dynamics. Thus, Foucault's strategic understanding of power is useful for understanding the specificity of struggles being waged by different Aboriginal nations in relation to the same State. The State is being challenged on many fronts at the same time by many Aboriginal groups in terms of land claims, treaty rights, and a host of social and economic issues. A multiplicity of strategies is in play and analyzing the specifics of each situation in its own cultural and historical context is important for understanding the

complexity of Aboriginal resistance and the political spaces Aboriginal peoples are creating through resistance.

Thus, from my perspective, in terms of Aboriginal-Canadian relations a complementary analysis which brings together the strengths of the critical structural analysis of internal colonialism (power as coercive) with the strengths of a strategic analysis of microprocesses (power as relational and constructive) is highly useful. However, while I believe such a pragmatic approach moves us forward, it too remains only a partial resolution. First and most importantly, as with my earlier critique of modernity, it does not embrace Aboriginal epistemology. The inclusion of an affirmative postmodern position, however, does open the possibility of entering into the difference that Aboriginal difference makes. From an affirmative place, the deepest challenge would mean having to listen at the level of Taylor's unrealized deep diversity. Perhaps the greatest stumbling block to hearing in such a listening would be accepting a subjectivity that is grounded in the spiritual. Where Aboriginal thought proceeds from a sacred cosmology, postmodern thought in one continuous tension with modernism proceeds from a rejection of metaphysical foundations.<sup>4</sup> Davis (1993) asks: "Is it possible to reconcile non-metaphysical, non-transcendent theoretical perspectives advocated by scholars...with the metaphysical foundations that are part of the cultural fabric of many of the world's oppressed (p.101)?" Although theoretically possible, postmodernism continues the exclusion of Spirit even as it deconstructs the absoluteness of Reason as a meta-narrative of Enlightenment thought. Secondly, the inherent tension between critical and postmodern epistemologies on the question of teleological orientation, played out on the issue of deconstruction and political purposes, remains unresolved. From a critical standpoint, deconstructive analysis is a means to reconstructed social

relations. From an affirmative postmodern perspective, more voices participate more fully as subjects in the debate and in ongoing resistance but reconstructed relations or alternative visions are not necessarily entertained. Aboriginal peoples in Canada do have an explicit vision and political project articulated as co-existence. Co-existence is the only likely future that could justly be called post-colonial.<sup>5</sup> From this perspective, resistance on the part of either colonizer or colonized to the coercion and ethnocentrism of colonialism while necessary is not enough to constitute or reconstruct new relations. In my view, *transforming* the subjectivity of both colonizer and colonized is required to achieve co-existence.

### **Towards Connecting Across Difference**

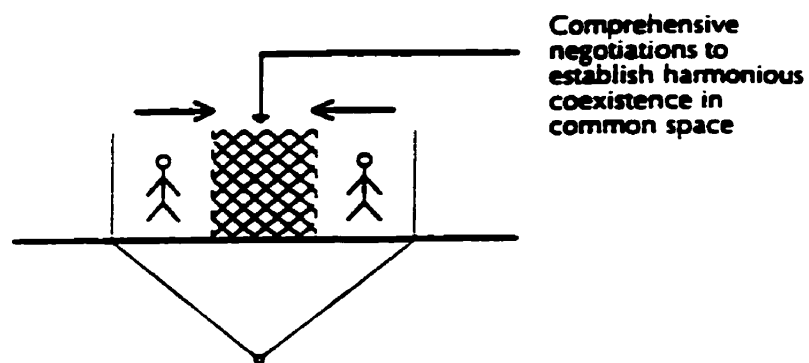
Having reviewed the postmodern position on difference as an alternative to liberal notions of cultural pluralism and having speculated on points of convergence and tension between postmodernist and Aboriginal thought, I come to the following conclusions from the discussion thus far. Whether constructed as an equality of difference or an equality of sameness, neither provides a workable framework for a politics which would respect cultural difference and self-determination on the basis of shared power. Where modernism retains hegemony over a homogenized cultural pluralism, postmodernism would support that pluralism and sustain it through strategies of ongoing resistance to homogenization. The Aboriginal perspective, as a view from outside this Western dialectic, helps us to see that what is missing in that discourse, namely, a third option, that of co-existence. Co-existence or "cultural democracy" (Ramirez & Castaneda 1980: 16-17) implies bicultural relations based on an interdependent existence. It is this conceptual framework that the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples puts forward when



it states explicitly that its proposals "are not concerned with multicultural policy but with a vision of a just multinational federation that recognizes its historical foundations and values its historical nations as an integral part of the Canadian identity and the Canadian political fabric (RCAP 1996b: xxiv).

What we learn from the Aboriginal paradigm of co-existence is that mutual relations of respect are predicated on two grounds: a recognition and acceptance of difference which facilitates self-rule and self-determination and ongoing inter-cultural dialogue and relations expressed as shared power. Shared power begins with respect for Aboriginal difference (self-rule). Respect for difference expressed as cultural self-determination provides the foundation for connecting across difference; less than this results in domination or unbalanced and disharmonious relations. Because difference in the Aboriginal paradigm does not exclude social relations with other groups, an equality in difference enables a recognition of mutual interests in the sphere of social relations (indeed in other spheres as well). I reiterate here Dockstator's depiction of how the re-establishment of external boundaries between Aboriginal and Canadian societies through self-governance leads to mutual relations of co-existence:

**Figure 88: Purpose of the self-government agreement**



In this sense, the Aboriginal vision is not isolationist; it is quintessentially about relationship and the interconnectedness of all forms of life. Even in resistance, it is always moving towards relationship and balance and harmony in that relationship, as the arrows in Figure 88 indicate.

When the philosophical grounding of current dominant discourses is examined, it becomes evident that a similar vision is not only lacking but not possible within the framework of liberalism. This constitutes the source of the paradigm muddle: there is no alternative framework to enable the construction of post-colonial relations. Postmodern critique is helpful in exposing the West's cultural imperatives by drawing out the inherent propensity to totalization and homogenization but that critique alone is insufficient for reconstructing relations between culturally diverse and unequal groups. In order to envision "a new relationship" with Aboriginal peoples from a Canadian perspective, the question becomes on what basis could a framework of co-existence be constructed? Leonard (1997) provides an opening.

Leonard's project is directed to outlining the possibilities of a reconstructed discourse on welfare from a critical postmodern standpoint (p.179). He prefigures from existing debates and experiences the types of discourses, ethics and practices needed to advance an emancipatory reconstruction of welfare. He does so by building on the emancipatory elements in both modern and postmodern discourses, cognizant of the limitations of each. While Leonard addresses the welfare state, I believe his argument can be applied productively to the reconstruction of Aboriginal-Canadian relations in terms of providing a basis for co-existence. Without doing justice to his whole argument, I focus on those ethics and practices which he articulates as foundational to reconstruction and which I view as relevant for the construction of co-existence as a post-colonial paradigm.

## **Grounding An Ethics of Interdependence**

Following deconstruction, the question of reconstruction returns us to emancipatory narratives. However, following deconstruction there can be no return to such narratives "on the basis of a unilinear perspective on history, the unfolding of inevitable laws of development...which determine the overall trajectory of human societies" (Leonard 1997:27). Leonard argues that a narrative of emancipation can only be "imagined" and that possible ways forward can only be suggested because the only certainty is uncertainty (p.27). However, from a critical perspective, accepting emancipation as an uncertain story with no guaranteed outcomes does not mean that the discourses of equality and justice themselves must be rejected. What needs to be rejected is their universality and what needs to be recognized is their social construction; they remain socially constructed, culturally relative discourses pertaining to the West. Such relativization, however, can allow us to see new possibilities:

Nothing about these 'universal' narratives has changed except our acknowledgement that the Western notions of justice and certain kinds of equality have been culturally produced within a specific historical period of short duration. They are, therefore, culturally relative and are not necessarily shared, even as ideals, by other cultures. Other notions of human well-being, long rendered silent by Western colonialism, begin to take their place alongside those of the Eurocentred West - African, Aboriginal, Asian and other culturally produced conceptions of welfare - and we slowly start to learn that it is possible to think differently than we have previously thought, perceive the world differently, even feel differently (p.28).

The congruence here with Aboriginal epistemology is notable. This position in a sea of diverse cultures and social conditions enables us to envision a process of arriving at some agreed upon values, "called *universal by consent*" and "established as a result of political struggle which resolves itself in a consensus amongst those striving for emancipation" (p. 28). The values which

Leonard identifies as central to this project of emancipation are similar to some of the foundational principles of Aboriginal epistemology. They center on diversity, solidarity and interdependence as values.

Leonard argues that if human diversity rather than an essential humanness is taken to be what humans have in common, then the first universal for a new foundation must be the value of diversity (p.28). Consent with respect to the value of diversity, particularly cultural diversity in terms of human existence, could mitigate against the tendency to greater homogeneity (p. 29). As noted in Chapter One, what Aboriginal thinkers would add from the perspective of a non-anthropocentric cosmology is the mirroring of human cultural diversity in terms of an equally necessary bio-diversity.

Acknowledging the value of diversity, however, is insufficient in terms of providing a basis for emancipatory struggle (p.29). Gaining agreement with respect to the value of diversity as a universal implies creating a degree of solidarity. The inherent "danger of solidarity *appropriating* difference" in the supposed interests of the higher good of emancipation remains ever present (p. 29).

From a Western perspective, accepting diversity from a position of cultural relativity implies that constant struggle is necessary to avoid this "power over" tendency always present in the West (p. 30). Nonetheless, the risks of solidarity must be accepted in terms of emancipation. For Leonard, it is the actual interdependence of individual identities and cultures which enables struggle on broad, collective fronts (p.29).

Having outlined the value orientation of his framework, I want to focus on Leonard's articulation of interdependence which I believe to be the core of his argument with respect to a

reconstituted welfare state and the core argument required for reconstituting Aboriginal-Canadian relations in terms of co-existence.

### **The Interdependent Subject and The Collectivity**

A foundational dialectic in modern Western sociology is that of the individual's relation to the social world as autonomous or as socially constituted as argued, in nature/nurture debates, for example. Expressed in terms of Western political philosophy, that spectrum of positions spans liberalism's emphasis on the autonomous individual through to Marxism's construction of human beings as social creatures who nonetheless act on history, although not under conditions of their own choosing. Much postmodern discourse focuses on how modern thought has constructed individuals as autonomous and independent obscuring the ways in which the state and capital have used such discourses to subjugate subjectivity.

Leonard argues that mutual interdependence is at the core of our subjectivity (p.165) and that our mutual interdependence has been obscured by the ideological illusion of individual independence and autonomy (p. 59-60). In the case of the welfare state, subjectivity has been constructed within the discursive division of the subject as independent or dependent (p.50), a division which carries heavy moral judgment. With respect to the current dominant discourse on "welfare dependency", for example, independence becomes just a more acceptable form of dependence when transferred from the state to the labour market (p. 51).

With respect to the individual, control is maintained not only through the intervention of the external forces of the state, including administrative and professional practices but also through what Foucault termed *self-surveillance* wherein self-discipline becomes the most

efficient and cost-effective form of control (p.56). Leonard observes that "self-surveillance experienced as autonomy becomes, in effect, a moral virtue" according to self-imposed moral goals (p. 56). With respect to the "gaze" of the professions on clients, in terms of surveillance, the practices of self-disclosure and confession are considered to be preconditions for having needs met through the provision of services (p.57).

If interdependence is obscured by such illusions of individual independence, then how might relations of interdependence be advanced? Leonard departs from Foucault's analysis of power relations by relocating subjectivity and the concepts of self-care, self-surveillance and disclosure from the context of individual to individuals in collectivities:

What cannot be satisfactorily explained in Foucault's account is the process whereby self-disclosure and the reconstitution of identity is undertaken within a collectivity, such as a feminist women's group...In this collective practice, where there is recognition of mutual dependence as a condition for the functioning of the group and where, therefore, there is not one 'detached' observer, one expert gaze, it is in the act of self-reflection and of speaking and listening to others that the subject constitutes him- or herself and recognizes the emergence of a new and possibly even unstable identity (p.60).

Leonard concludes that the collective practice of self-disclosure and the development of critical consciousness in revealing oppressive conditions can provide a basis from which alternative explanations of the social order emerge; explanations "which challenge the discourse of fragmented individualism and begin to articulate a different discourse, one which maintains that interdependence is at the core of human subjectivity" (p. 60).

From Leonard's perspective, a politics of collective resistance is crucial to a project of reconstruction and the concept of mutually interdependent subjects provides the foundation for such a project. Leonard states that "for human welfare to flourish, modernity must take a different path, a form already prefigured in a multiplicity of oppositional (and identity) types of

politics" (p. 162). It is a politics of hope which must be forged rather than an analysis which can lead to paralysis (p. 162).

### **A Politics of Hope**

From Leonard's perspective, an emancipatory project requires a politics of hope (p. 162). Hope generates commitment to emancipation. Anger and moral outrage at the degrading conditions of existence, the result of human action, "is the human attribute which has the most possibility of generating the kind of individual and collective resistance which is a necessary precondition for emancipation" (p.162). Hope as belief and anger as explicit emotion enter Leonard's discourse as against the 'cool' distancing of theoretical analysis and intellectual detachment from the heat of political struggle (p. 162). Born out of the critique of modernity, grounded in an ethic of interdependence, under conditions of uncertainty there can be no illusion of fresh beginnings or recreating grand schemes which resulted "to a large degree, in a system of domination in the interests of exclusion, homogenization and the defence of expert power" (p. 163). In a context of having to make "ethical judgments without rules" (p. 149) we, thus, have to think in terms of possibilities under present conditions which offer no guarantees but emphasize "process rather than plan" to enable us to move from a position of resistance to the creation of change (p. 163). This basis can provide "for the kind of welfare which no longer excludes the Other, nor includes it as a dominated part of itself, but respects the diversity of the Other because it understands that its knowledge as an agent of welfare is not absolute or universal but based upon cultural discourses and practices which are always open to critique" (p. 162).

Leonard's construction of a discourse of interdependence based on the values of diversity

and solidarity and his focus on practices which emphasize process over plan and dialogue over authoritarianism provide an ethical framework for proceeding with the work of reconstruction. I view such moral foundations as central to the exploration of the possibility of a postcolonial co-existence. From this perspective, I hear his discussion of reconstruction as part of the internal dialogue addressed to the privileged, dominating, colonizing "us" in relation to excluded and subordinated "others". As discussed earlier, from Leonard's viewpoint, two moral obligations result from this internal reflection: a responsibility to difference and a responsibility to solidarity (p. 164). Leonard provides important guidance here for social policy practice and for social workers engaged in such practice. The obligation to acknowledge and celebrate difference assumes that "the individual subject resists in diverse ways cultural inscription by experts, whilst at the same time being constituted through such resistance" (p. 164). The obligation here is to support such resistance through practices which depathologize the experiences of subjects, renaming them "as the effects of racism or other discourses and practices of social domination":

A moral responsibility to otherness also takes the form of drawing back from the tendency to express caring in terms of an homogenizing expert narrative which so fills up the discourse on illness, or distress, or material and emotional need, that space for the expression of difference - of the varieties of experience and meaning resulting from the diversities of culture, gender, class, sexuality, ability, age - becomes so confined that the subject's narrative is effectively excluded. The emerging practice which attempts to counteract this homogenizing impulse embedded in professional expertise emphasizes co-authorship of a joint narrative about problems, needs, claims...we are speaking here of efforts to establish a dialogue of the interpretations of narratives where recognition of the diversity is established as a priority (p. 164).

The ethical stance of co-authorship of a joint narrative and the establishment of a dialogue of the interpretations of narratives represent tremendous challenges and opportunities for policy-making, for the academy and for social work as a profession which will be addressed in



subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

In relation to the need for a postcolonial ethics to guide policy practice with Aboriginal peoples, this stance provides a constructive beginning. However, as previously noted, in the context of organized politics, implementing such principles is not without tension; the tension arises between the ethics of diversity and the ethics of solidarity. Leonard in dialectical fashion characterizes the nature of the tension but, adopting a postmodern stance, does not reach for a transcendent resolution:

This is a necessary tension, an unresolvable contradiction between moral imperatives which must, with whatever difficulty, be continually balanced against each other. The ethical practice which results from this tension is one which observes continuous vigilance to avoid either imperative obliterating the other. The danger of an unrestrained emphasis on difference is that it will lead to cultural exclusiveness, restricted identities or intense individualism. The comparable danger of a triumphant and unreflecting solidarity is that domination and homogenization become a practice legitimated by a discourse on mutual interdependence (p.165).

If mutual interdependence is recognized as the core of our subjectivity, then the tension between it and a responsibility to otherness can be viewed primarily as productive rather than problematic (p. 165). It also constitutes a precondition for any effective ideological counter-move to the dominant discourses of modernity and the further fragmentation and individuation of subjects under late capitalism (p. 165).

Leonard suggests that an alternative practice engages in a discourse on the similarities between subjects confronting common problems and common needs in the context of recognized difference and diversity from which emerges a potential solidarity between subjects. In terms of planning and objectives, Leonard is careful to critique the type of rationality such a dialogue can fall into: "Objectives, in other words, might be taken to imply hierarchy, control and an exclusive

emphasis on the instrumentality directed to the monitoring and surveillance of the subjects of welfare, always, of course, 'in their own interests'" (p.166). Needs, both common and specific, are established through debate, dialogue, and a listening to others which eventually may lead to a consensus sufficient upon which to build social policies and struggle to achieve them (p. 167), thereby facilitating a process of empowerment and sharing power among subordinated populations (p.168). Reflexivity and the method of 'internal critique' (p.171) is required particularly on the part of professionals in order to deal with the contradiction between an ethical commitment to caring, on the one hand and the process of objectification and the rhetoric of multiculturalism in the context of a drive towards homogenization, on the other (p. 171). As part of a strategy of collective resistance and in order to avoid the tendency to abuse power and unnecessarily limit the agency of others, Leonard reinforces the emphasis on dialogue:

It proposes that subject/professional interactions take, as far as possible, a dialogical rather than an authoritarian form and, on the assumption that knowledge is socially produced, that the interpretation of complementary or divergent narratives is seen as a legitimate arena of contestation, compromise, and where possible, agreement (p. 170).

### **Cross-Cultural Dialogue**

With respect to the importance of effective and constructive dialogue which respects cultural difference as a politics and process central to policy-making in Aboriginal-Canadian relations, Leonard provides a useful conceptual framework. He acknowledges that "the prospects for effective and peaceful communication of similarities and differences between cultural communities...look, as we approach the end of the twentieth century, decidedly bleak" (p. 70). In situations of marked inequality between dominant and subordinate cultures, segregation in the

form of demands for culturally and racially specific services provides an emancipatory discourse aimed at dominant services perceived "as incapable of overcoming the institutional racism that lies at their core" (p.70). This discourse emphasizes equality and rights and *not* communication between cultures (p.70):

In essence, the struggle is seen as needing to take place not primarily over the issue of cultural sensitivity or the celebration of difference, but over the power of neo-colonialism and racism...They want or accept the maintenance of difference but without the hierarchy which is rooted in colonialism (p.70).

Thus, in attempting to develop cross-cultural criteria for truth, validity and morally acceptable behaviour, it becomes crucial to develop principles of communication which "do not replicate the hierarchy of modernity's discourse directed to the Other" (p.71). If such criteria cannot be based on transcendental universals, which sustain hegemonic relations, then they must be based on consensus arrived at through "cross-cultural tools of adjudication" developed through dialogue (p. 71). Following Nicholson (1992), establishing this process becomes "a means of explicating the criteria for truth *embedded in social practices*" (p. 71).

Communication may break down as a result of differences of cultural traditions, rules, notions about the legitimacy of claims, but such difficulties may be eventualities which can be avoided, depending on the rules agreed in any dialogical engagement, suggests Nicholson (p. 71).

In this light, Leonard constitutes cross-cultural communication as "a politics of conversation" whose discursive rules would include the following injunctions:

*first*, to attempt to avoid implicit ethnocentrism in adjudicating truth claims, and so preventing a deterioration of dialogue into authoritarian assertion; *secondly*, to give no priority to culturally specific forms of communication, encouraging every form to be expressed, such as speech, music, dance, ritual; *thirdly*, to acknowledge that Western political and moral values are not grounded outside of human history but are socially and historically constructed and cannot be taken as self-evident universal preconditions of communication; they may, however, be

*argued* for and compared to alternatives (p. 71).

This postmodern approach to cross-cultural communication offers no guarantees but offers dialogue under the above injunctions in place of hierarchical assertions of the Truth. As such, this approach implies that "continuous exploration, experimentation, historical contextualization and the understanding of power relations becomes the way to proceed" (p. 70-71).

As previously noted, in many respects, this descriptive possibility captures part of the reality of the current state of negotiation in Aboriginal-Canadian relations. In the context of an intense period of negotiation of Aboriginal interests marked by a paradigm muddle in terms of the Canadian state, Aboriginal resistance has forced at times such exploration and experimentation and challenged the lack of historical recognition and the power relations embedded in colonialism. With the rejection of the 1969 White Paper (the last grand plan of equality in the form of assimilation) and lacking a post-colonial framework, the Canadian State has been forced to consider and has come some distance in recognizing Aboriginal demands which would foster co-existence as Aboriginal peoples in the context of Confederation.

However, Leonard is also aware of the other effect of such negotiation, which again has application in terms of the current Aboriginal struggle for recognition. Postmodernism would seem to disempower subordinate populations at the very point they need to demand emancipation in the name of equality and justice (p. 72). Leonard states that "uncertainty may be the ethically appropriate contemporary condition for those whose previous (and still surviving) tradition was based on the certainty of an ideologically legitimated oppression" but is it for those who have been historically subjected to "the endless experience of debilitating and destructive uncertainty (p. 72)?" In terms of Aboriginal-Canadian negotiation, some policy analysts are deeply sceptical

about the seeming willingness of the State to recognize Aboriginal peoples when devolution of responsibilities occurs simultaneously with funding cutbacks (Angus 1990); in Fraser's terms, this amounts to recognition *without* redistribution.

At the level of cross-cultural communication, I think Leonard's concept of a politics of conversation, although not fully developed, provides a very useful opening for conceptualizing the dynamics of dialogue. His injunctions, for example, could help to explain why Aboriginal-Canadian dialogue at the policy table often fails and by the same token, could provide a basis for understanding why some cross-cultural policy-making exercises might succeed.

### **Implications for Policy-making**

In this chapter, I have sought to make explicit at the philosophical level the points of convergence and tension amongst Aboriginal thought, modern liberal thought and postmodern thought in order to clarify the existing paradigm and to find within these various positions a basis for dialogue across difference that could move us beyond colonial relations. Confronted with an Aboriginal vision of co-existence, both liberalism and postmodernism prove insufficient with respect to providing a sufficiently workable framework for a politics which would respect cultural difference and Aboriginal self-determination on the basis of shared power. In this impasse, the Aboriginal vision of co-existence provides a third option. In effect, co-existence constitutes the post-colonial alternative that neither liberalism or postmodernism alone can embrace.

In the context of this Western dilemma, Leonard provides a useful opening. While doing justice to the oppositions contained in modern/postmodern discourses, when viewed more as a

dialectic, the hegemonic/counter-hegemonic tension becomes productive. Writing from a perspective of emancipation and with a view to reconstruction, Leonard critically and effectively combines elements of both liberalism and postmodernism to find a way forward. In a world where the reigning metanarratives have rendered us impotent in the face of our multiple differences, uncertainty remains the only certainty. If a recognition of our mutual interdependence provides a bridge for communication across difference, the obligations to difference and to solidarity, which emerge from that inter-subjectivity, enable us to meet each other half way. Once there, equality and justice, rethought as culturally and socially constructed and not as universal and hierarchically directed assertions of the Truth, provide us with a moral and political basis to engage in dialogue and to be self-reflexive in that dialogue.

Having arrived at a place of dialogue, we recognize that the historical context of broken promises carried in the legacy of colonization which belongs to us, makes it very difficult to establish the trust necessary to engage in dialogue. Understanding the destructive impact of coercive forms of power and committed to a truly joint partnership, we arrive with no agenda or grand plan in mind. We approach the dialogue as a process and we discuss together the ground rules for having a conversation. Exercising shared power as a moral and political principle, we arrive at those decisions by consensus.

For those of who are non-Aboriginal partners in the dialogue, we are cognizant to respect difference in terms of avoiding implicit ethnocentrism, remaining open to multiple forms and practices of communication, including teachings, ceremonies, prayer and the presence of elders, and allowing our perspectives to be informed, shaped or changed by a different worldview. We recognize that the process we are engaged in is an exercise in biculturalism where we as well as

our partners "have to double understand" (Elder Peter O'Chiese, cited in Davis, p. 291) not just cultural differences but rather, be willing to engage in dialogue from the "heartspace" as well as the "headspace".<sup>6</sup> We pay as much, if not more attention, to process and relationship-building in order to counteract our tendency to dominate the conversation in terms of content, analysis and outcomes. We accept the uncertainty that nothing is guaranteed but trust that the tools we develop together through dialogue can establish a means of explicating the criteria for truth embedded in the very social practices we are engaged in. Turning it on its head, we recognize that relativism "becomes the situation which results when communication breaks down" (Nicholson, cited in Leonard, p.71).

It is this imagined way forward, however tentative, that provides us with a framework for examining the politics and process of an actual Aboriginal-Canadian partnership in the experience of policy-making. We do so in the hope that by examining such practices, we will understand, imagine and realize more fully what co-existence entails and thus, what the post-colonial means.

## ENDNOTES

1. In the first volume of its final report, entitled "Looking Forward, Looking Back", the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples provides a comprehensive telling of the history and cultures of Aboriginal peoples on this continent. Recognizing the profound gap in knowledge which exists in terms of Western perspectives, they recommend further that the federal government undertake an Aboriginal History Project, to be convened by SSHRC, with a board composed of a majority of Aboriginal people to plan and guide the project over a twenty year period (Recommendation 1.7.1, p. 237).

2. For example, the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto entitles its newly constructed and reduced exhibit on Aboriginal peoples in Ontario as "proto-history".

3. There is another emerging literature which suggests itself here; namely that of post-colonial theory and discourse. This literature is written with reference to those peoples in the post-war period who through liberation struggles entered a process of decolonization which resulted in political independence from European (mainly British) colonial powers. This framework explicitly excludes settler colonies and the experience of Aboriginal peoples under conditions of internal colonialism. The cases of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand are omitted on the grounds that once having been granted Dominion status:

Their subsequent history and economic development, and current location within global capitalist relations, have been very much in the metropolitan mode, rather than a (post-)colonial one. As such their inclusion in the category of post-colonial becomes something of a problem, though that has not prevented calls for just such an inclusion...Clearly, this is not a matter for prescription, but it would seem that the argument for inclusion has not been won (Williams & Chrisman 1993:4).

While this literature excludes itself from discussion here, a second more constructive reason for not including it concerns its relationship to postmodernism. As McClintock (1993) critically observes, post-colonial discourse seeks to mimic postmodernism in its constructions. Rather than become mired in a set of discourses which refer to specific historical and cultural formations sufficiently different from that of Canada, I prefer to deal directly with the main ideas of postmodernism which this literature builds on.

4. For example, Giroux (1992) suggests "a border pedagogy" which combines "the modernist emphasis on the capacity of individuals to use critical reason to address the issue of public life with a postmodern concern with how we might experience agency in a world constituted in differences *unsupported by transcendent phenomena or metaphysical guarantees*" (emphasis added) (p. 29, cited in Davis 1993: 72).

5. As addressed in previous chapters, the particularity of "internal colonialism" means that a post-colonial project in Canada must necessarily involve transformed relations. Unlike the classic



colonial case where the issue is at least partially resolved when the colonizers return to their home country, no one in Canada is entertaining the option of de-population or resettlement as a decolonizing strategy. Thus, co-existence in the only likely future that can be called "post-colonial" in the Canadian context.

6. Ross (1996) articulates his understanding of "heartspace" in Aboriginal ways of thinking in the following excerpts:

According to Aboriginal teachings, it also appears that objectivity is, in fact, an illusion. That understanding suggests that we cannot help being engaged with the things around us, cannot help having emotional and spiritual reactions to them. We can pretend we don't, but that's all our reaction is - just pretend. We can dress up our subjective, personal reactions in objective, nonpersonal language, but it's largely a sham (p. 162).

It should come as no surprise that the issue of "correct speaking" has been given a great deal of thought in Aboriginal cultures, given that it was spoken words, not written ones, through which the teachings, knowledge, history and law were passed to subsequent generations. Nor should it surprise anyone that in a world centered on relationships, speech should be seen as a potentially powerful tool to affect and change the nature of those relationships...(p. 163).

...And what kind of speaking creates that kind of power? Something often referred to as "heart-speaking." The opposite way, naturally enough, is called "head-speaking"...In the case of heart-speaking for instance, a public speaker prepares more by settling his heart and spirit into a respectful, honest and *feeling* state than by writing out and memorizing the specifics of what he will say. The latter deals with information and aims primarily at the head. For many traditional people, it will mean taking time before the act of speaking to make ceremonial preparations - like praying and "smudging" with sage or sweet grass for purification. If that state can be achieved, it is understood that the spiritual and emotional content of the presentation will be strong. If that is so, then the speech itself will be strong, and the audience will thus be respected, honoured - and moved (p. 164).

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Bridging Theory and Practice: Participatory Research**

#### **Introduction**

The Aboriginal co-chair looked at me and said, "Participatory research is the *only* way to go."

- field notes, meeting with the Joint Steering Committee, Sept. 26, 1995.

In the previous chapters, I explored at a theoretical level the dilemmas and challenges of co-existence grounded in a respect for Aboriginal difference. A potential opening for constructing just relations between Aboriginal peoples and mainstream Canada based on interdependence was also discussed. In this chapter we move one step closer to examining these issues in practice.

An examination of the research approach, research context, and research methodology in this chapter acts a bridge between the theoretical content of the previous chapters and the chapters to follow which address the case study. The dilemmas articulated previously render research itself problematic; the question becomes how to do research in "an unjust world" (Lather 1986: 257) and in this instance, when research involves Aboriginal people? Framed in this way, the issue becomes less abstract. As a non-Aboriginal researcher, this question set me on a search for an approach to research which connects to the alternative theoretical framework discussed in Chapter Three and which overcomes colonial practices and ethnocentric bias in Western research.

This chapter begins with a brief review of past research practice which is deeply implicated in perpetuating the colonization of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. This legacy impacts

research today. Aboriginal peoples are necessarily distrustful of outside researchers from the academy. The academy in turn has been challenged by Aboriginal peoples and new approaches and practices are emerging as a result. Participatory approaches to research, through an explicit commitment to difference and solidarity, provide one ethically responsible alternative to Western positivist paradigms.<sup>1</sup>

A participatory approach to research was adopted for this study. Following an examination of this approach, I will discuss the research relationship established for this study and the research design and methodology which developed as a result of a collaborative process.

### **The Legacy of Colonization in Research**

The research relationship between Aboriginal peoples and outside academic researchers has been described as a "parasitic" one, a relationship of benefit to the outside professional, but one that has often had a detrimental effect on Aboriginal communities and cultures (Deloria 1969; Maruyama 1981). Macaulay (1994) cites what has been the all too common experience for Aboriginal communities:

Outside research teams swooped down from the skies, swarmed into town, asked nosy questions that were none of their business and then disappeared never to be heard of again (p. 1888).

She identifies two impacts as a result of these actions: "researchers will never know or understand the degree of hurt and anger felt by the community as a result of these actions" and "the community that has experienced this "helicopter" or "safari" research will be unlikely to allow further research after such a negative experience" (p. 1888). In response to requests from outside researchers it is common to hear Aboriginal people say that they have been "researched to

death", implying intrusion and with little or no resulting benefit to the communities or groups involved (Smith 1999).

The history of research with Aboriginal peoples reveals that these claims are warranted; research by the academy and other institutions in Canada has been linked to the dominant interests of the State. As previously discussed, the colonization of Aboriginal peoples to advance white settlement and the formation of the Canadian nation-state through Confederation was premised on assimilation. As an ethnocentric assumption, assimilation was justified through different constructions of "the Indian" as "uncivilized savage" or "noble savage" viewed variously as a threat to or in need of paternal protection by the emerging Canadian state (Francis 1992; Tobias 1976). As the guiding conceptual framework for Aboriginal-Canadians relations, assimilation was the conscious intention driving all policy in this century until the early 1970s. In effect, the Canadian state sought to make its own myth of "the vanishing Indian" a reality through the dispossession of land and disruption of traditional economies, the outlawing of cultural and religious practices, the forced entry into residential schools and prohibitions against use of Aboriginal languages, and many other practices.

In the post-war period, while assimilation remained the policy objective it took the form of a liberal discourse on citizenship, based on the principles of integration and formal equality (Fleras and Elliott 1992b: 42-43). To become Canadian, and to be recognized as such by the federal government, "Indians" would have to renounce their status as First Peoples. While previously the study of Indians had been the purview of anthropology and archaeology, it is in this period that social scientists and those in the medical profession become intimately involved in research on Aboriginal peoples. Research studies in these disciplines were aimed at hastening

assimilation by means of understanding the processes of acculturation. Based on the ethnocentric premise of the inherent superiority of dominant groups and societies, acculturation theory promoted the idea that deficits in certain cultural groups explained their failure to adapt to social change. Long and Dickason (1996) explain the impact studies based on acculturation theory had on Aboriginal peoples:

Consequently, aboriginal people were blamed for having inadequate skills, a lack of understanding in relation to European ways, and a general unwillingness to commit themselves to alleviating their widespread personal and social problems. Apparent support for acculturation theory was found in aboriginal peoples' high rates of physical and mental illness, suicide, homicide, incarceration, and unemployment and in their relatively impoverished standards of living (p.2).

Shewell (1995) has analyzed the role of the social sciences in research on Aboriginal peoples in this era. Two conclusions can be drawn with respect to the colonizing dynamics of Western research. Ethnocentric assumptions, reinforced by the positivist principle of objectivity in Western thought, legitimated the treatment of Aboriginal peoples as objects. Shewell states:

The idea of Indians as scientific objects provided the necessary justification to relegate any claim they had on their right to cultural and social integrity. Almost any study could be justified if it promised to shed light on Indian dependence and their perceived aversion to acculturation to liberal society and the work ethic (p. 508).

The unquestioned acceptance of the objectification of Aboriginal peoples in turn justified the conduct of research where "standards of respect that applied to the dominant culture were dismissed in the interests of science and progress when applied to the other" (Shewell 1995: 507).

The value of recalling this legacy is fourfold. First, it reminds us that despite positivist claims to the contrary, research is a value-laden undertaking and that part of our responsibility as

researchers is to examine the cultural assumptions and values which permeate our work. Secondly, the ethnocentricity evident in the history of research on Aboriginal peoples has produced a justified legacy of distrust towards Western researchers which continues today. Thirdly, the long-held ethical standards in research of respect, maleficence and beneficence were not adequate to challenging our own ethnocentricism as Western researchers and thus, to preventing harm, let alone providing benefit to Aboriginal peoples. Lastly, the belief in the inherent superiority of Western knowledge precluded and thus denied any recognition of Aboriginal cultural integrity, including Aboriginal knowledge and ways of knowing.

### **Participatory Research as an Alternative Paradigm**

Since the 1970s, Aboriginal resistance to the multiple forms of assimilation, coupled with political mobilization to assert their rights and identities to exist as Aboriginal peoples in Canada, has had some impact on the academy. Academic disciplines and professions have been challenged to rethink their relationships to Aboriginal peoples, their research agendas, and the way that research is conducted. In reviewing the implications for anthropology, for example, Dyck (1990) acknowledges that Aboriginal demands that research be "more relevant to the self-determined priorities and needs of aboriginal communities" has produced both tension and change (p.43). He concludes that

no social science or profession possesses either the right or the capacity to exercise exclusive knowledge of any people or issue...Put simply, anthropologists have been relieved of the burdensome presumption of being virtually sole "owners" (Gusfield 1981) of "the Indian situation" within the social sciences (p.47).

As a precondition for any form of practice, Dyck highlights the importance of continued

discussion "concerning the objectives and terms under which anthropological research and publication can and should take place" (p.48). In light of concerns that research help to improve conditions rather than simply study them, he points to "collaborative and advocacy research strategies" as avenues to be pursued (p.48).

Before examining participatory approaches in relation to research with Aboriginal peoples, it is important to understand the particular challenge that participatory research represents within the Western academy itself. While it can be taken up as a set of techniques for making conventional research more effective by making ethical standards more responsive, in my view, this is a distortion or cooptation of the intentions of participatory research approaches. The deeper challenge relates to the epistemological framework in which all research is undertaken.

Reason (1994), writing from a critical Western perspective, discusses the epistemological crisis of our times. In this view, the crisis relates to the effects of positivism as part of a modern world-view based on linear progress, absolute truth and rational planning

that sees science and everyday life as separate and the researcher as subject within a world of separate objects...The way we think and how we think separates us from our experience, from each other, and from the rhythms and patterns of the natural world...the most important task before us is to learn to think in new ways (Bateson, 1972), and thinking in new ways implies new forms of practice (p.9).

In earlier writings, Reason with Rowan (1981) coined the term "human inquiry" to articulate multiple movements from different philosophical strands in the Western academy that were moving towards "new paradigm research"; the 'new physics', post-positivism, and the postmodern movement were included here (p.9). Qualitative research approaches, including participant observation and grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967: Glaser 1978) among others, were also identified as part of this trend. <sup>2</sup>

In his later writing, Reason (1994) uses the term "human inquiry" to encompass the "all those forms of search which aim to move beyond the narrow, positivistic and materialist worldview which has come to characterize the latter portion of the twentieth century" (p.10). In this context, he states that "the purpose of human inquiry is not so much the search for truth but to *heal*, and above all to heal the alienation, the split that characterizes modern experience" (p.10). For researchers this means

we can only truly do research *with* persons if we engage with them *as* persons, as co-subjects and thus as co-researchers: hence cooperative inquiry, participatory research, research partnerships and so on. And while understanding and action are logically separate, they cannot be separated in life...(p.10).

In a seminar I organized several years ago, Aboriginal leader Sylvia Maracle addressed the issue of research with Aboriginal communities. She began by saying that although people are at different stages, "everyone is in recovery from the effects of colonization". She discussed the social development occurring in communities over the last several decades as people have sought progressively to peel off layers of addictions, violence, and forms of abuse to come closer to their original identity as Aboriginal people. She discussed how difficult it was "for us trying to define us in the context of others defining us, outside us". In this context, "participatory research was the only way to go" because it was an approach that empowered an emergent, authentic identity in the context of a process of community development. She defined this approach to research as that which "heals the wound rather than creating more scar tissue" (First Nations House, University of Toronto, April 25, 1995).

To heal means to make whole. The research enterprise in this instance, as interactive encounter and engagement, becomes a vehicle for weaving together the tenuous threads of



relatedness which exist in the gap between Western and Aboriginal epistemologies. In the process, knowledge itself is expanded beyond Western instrumentalism and efficiency to reconnect the metaphysical with the physical. As Reason (1994) states so eloquently:

We can only understand our world as a whole if we are a part of it; as soon as we attempt to stand outside, we divide and separate. In contrast, making whole necessarily implies participation: one characteristic of a participative worldview is that the individual person is restored to the circle of community and the human community to the context of the wider natural world. To make whole also means to make holy: another characteristic of a participatory world-view is that meaning and mystery are restored to human experience, so that the world is once again experienced as a sacred place (Berman, 1981; Reason, 1993; Skolimowski, 1993) (p.10).

To return to the discussion in Chapter Three, the central ethical dilemma for those who seek an alternative to assimilationist constructions of the Other is how to embrace "two moral obligations which in practice have often stood in conflict with each other: to *difference* and to *solidarity*" (Leonard 1997: 164)? In Leonard's view a recognition of our mutual interdependence, the core of our subjectivity, provides an alternative ethical discourse (p. 165-166). In moving towards a new paradigm for research from Western perspectives, "participation" is that which holds the possibility of healing because it recognizes relatedness and the nature and quality of the relationship as a core issue.

As an alternative epistemological approach, participatory research not only recognizes the hegemony, limitedness and partiality of dominant knowledge systems, it also contains a set of assumptions about knowledge creation that depart from prevailing norms and which embody an ethics which cannot be viewed as separate from the creation of knowledge. Fundamental to its grounding is a recognition of the subject-subject relation (Reason and Rowan 1981: xviii); subjectivity itself is understood as interdependent.

In relation to this dissertation, I draw attention to a few of the principles which have emerged from a rich and diverse participatory research practice on several continents over the last twenty-five years. First and foremost is the valuation of local and indigenous knowledges (including oral traditions) and the re-legitimization of people's knowledge in support of daily struggle and survival (Tandon 1988:10). The monopoly of the researcher as "expert" is relativized and power/knowledge relations are exposed rather than hidden in an effort to move towards the democratization of knowledge creation (Hall et al 1982; Stoecker and Bonacich 1992). At the same time, participatory research efforts have assisted groups whose knowledge has been marginalized to acquire, incorporate, appropriate and reinterpret the knowledge produced by dominant system for their own use (Tandon 1988; Gaventa 1988). As distinct from other social research, dialogue is a highly distinguishing feature of participatory research (Park 1993: 12-13); knowledge is constituted in and through dialogue not only about the "facts" but about lives lived as whole persons. In this sense, it enables people to know themselves better as individuals and as a community (Park 1993:12-13). Lastly, participatory research differs in its purpose from traditional research in that it is explicitly and actively committed to the empowerment of marginalized and oppressed groups and the development of critical theory (Fischer 1990: 365). Thus, as an alternative to the dominant discourses within Western thought, participatory research attempts to create solidarity through a collaborative process and to act in solidarity with marginalized and oppressed communities and the issues they face.

As an alternative paradigm to conventional social science research, participatory approaches are identified in multiple ways in what is becoming an expansive literature (Allman et al 1997). While the terms vary, all share in common a joint process of construction and

decision-making in the research process which "argues for the articulation of points of view by the dominated or subordinated, whether from gender, race, ethnicity, or other structures of subordination" (Hall 1993: xvii; Tandon 1988).<sup>3</sup> For these reasons, participatory approaches to research have been increasingly embraced by Aboriginal organizations and communities.

### **Participatory Research and Aboriginal Peoples**

In tracing the development and uses of participatory research with Aboriginal peoples, Jackson (1993) identifies "the strong interest in Aboriginal-defined and Aboriginal-controlled research approaches" with the politicization of Aboriginal organizations in the last twenty-five years (p.49). Politicization in this context means that research is determined in relation to issues pertinent to communities in order to foster community development. Thus, community-controlled studies on land use, environmental assessment, health and social needs were early subjects of research. Jackson underscores the methodological achievement of these studies for dealing with the technical nature of problems and solutions "through a participatory, investigative process", employing sophisticated quantitative as well as qualitative methods (p. 53). Regarding the conduct of research, control over all aspects of the production of knowledge by the subjects as co-researchers is recognized as integral to cultural survival (Hoare et al 1993: 45-46). The involvement of Aboriginal people as co-researchers is intended to strengthen a community's capacity to do research and develop solutions which advance self-determination.

In terms of respect for and openness to Aboriginal knowledge, Colorado (1988) notes a certain congruence in terms of values between participatory research and Aboriginal science:

P.R. is collaborative, endogenous, heuristic and experiential. Transculturally, this

implies an ability to accept the idea of Native science and a sensitivity to the process-oriented, communally-based indigenous methodology...Validity or truth in P.R. derives from trustworthiness of data. Trustworthiness is readily understood in Native science...Moreover, various forms of "P.R. validity" - catalytic, illuminative and dialogic (Reason and Rowan) have nearly complete correspondence to Native expectations of science (p. 63-64).

In arguing for a bicultural research model respected by both cultures, Colorado views participatory research as a "bicultural scientific synthesizer...acting as a flow-through mechanism for scientific findings from both worlds" (p. 62-63).

Thus, from both Western and Aboriginal perspectives, participatory research holds out great promise and a growing track record in terms of the cultural mediation of difference towards constructive ends of benefit to Aboriginal communities as well as the academy.<sup>4</sup> However, given the legacy of research with Aboriginal people, counteracting Western ethnocentricity is an ongoing issue that in my view is not easily overcome even in participatory research practice with Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal researchers remind us that research with Aboriginal peoples must begin and end with Aboriginal perspectives:

Research is a cultural, human activity, and like all cultural activities it should proceed from the culture. "Culture" should not be added piecemeal to an imported research methodology. Because "First Nations research" so often begins with a Western majority culture viewpoint, the research process becomes one of interpreting the depths of the ocean while being fully aware only of the surface. Even when we do penetrate the depths, much of their richness is obscured because we are seeing as we would on top of the ocean's surface. Understanding begins when we accept the differences between above and below the water, when we begin to plan research and carry it out from the point of view appropriate to where we are situated. *When contemplating First Nations research, First Nations cultural principles and ways of expression should be predominant.* (Archibald & Bowman, 1995:11, emphasis in text)

The honouring of local knowledge, and in this case, Aboriginal epistemology and experience, entails entering into a process of learning from knowledges which at times stand

diametrically opposed to Western epistemology and particularly, some Western ways of coming to truth. However, when those of us as non-Aboriginal researchers enter the research process from the stance of a learner and actively engage in that learning process, although by no means guaranteed, the potential to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation based on ethnocentric assumptions is increased. As Lather (1986) observes, "Our best tactic at present is to construct research designs that demand a vigorous self-reflexivity" (p.270). My own process of learning across difference as a Western researcher will be discussed in Chapter Six.

The above discussion of participatory research as a cultural mediator contains implications for a new way of conceptualizing ethics. Ethics do not exist apart from the social and cultural worlds that locate and give them meaning. Standard research ethical codes of conduct are based on liberal norms which assume the primacy of the individual in terms of respect, harm and benefit. Furthermore, as a set of norms, they constitute a system of negative rights which maximizes individual freedom and in the name of that freedom offers no sanction for not doing good to others, as it were. These inadequacies are brought into bold relief when discussed in relation to Aboriginal peoples. The pursuit of knowledge itself has often been a sufficient justification of the means by the academy. The detrimental impact of unquestioned cultural assumptions in this pursuit has already been explored above. Norms with respect to research with collectivities have been decidedly absent until very recently.<sup>5</sup> This problematic is in part reflective of the broader unresolved liberal debate in Canada, the discourse of individual versus collective rights discussed in Chapter Two.

Participatory research approaches shift power and control from an individual to a collective which includes the participants as subjects. In contrast to minimalist standards which

reinforce a detached individualism, participatory research works with individuals as members of collectivities. Participation shifts consent from a passive to active engagement in defining and conducting research. Thus, without "relationship" there can be no research. From a Western perspective, the concept of respect takes on new ethical meaning as a result:

For persons, as autonomous beings, have a moral right to participate in decisions that claim to generate knowledge about them. Such a right...protects them...from being managed and manipulated...the moral principle of respect for persons is most fully honoured when power is shared not only in the application...but also in the generation of knowledge (Heron, cited in Lather 1986: 262).

The research guidelines established by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples (RCAP 1993) subsumes the minimalist liberal standards of respect, harm and benefit within a broader ethical framework of collaborative research which combines respect for individuals as individuals *and* as members of collectivities. Counteracting the Western tendency to treat "culture as an add-on to an imported methodology", the RCAP guidelines take seriously the ethic that "research should proceed from the culture" (cited above). Thus in addition to the conduct of the research process, they deal substantively with the treatment of Aboriginal knowledge, which is decidedly absent from standard codes of ethics. This approach is congruent with participatory research principles. The RCAP Guidelines represent the standard of "best practice" developed to ensure that "appropriate respect is given to the cultures, languages, knowledge and values of Aboriginal peoples, and to the standards used by Aboriginal peoples to legitimate knowledge" (p. 1). They are instructive in terms of what constitutes a culturally appropriate ethics of respect for Aboriginal peoples as a collectivity.

Seven principles ground the ethical stance of the Royal Commission. The first five deal specifically with Aboriginal difference in the dynamics of creating knowledge:

Aboriginal people have **distinctive perspectives and understandings**, deriving from their cultures and histories and embodied in Aboriginal languages. Research that has Aboriginal experience as its subject matter must reflect these perspectives and understandings.

In the past, research concerning Aboriginal peoples has usually been initiated outside the Aboriginal community and carried out by non-Aboriginal personnel. Aboriginal people have had almost no opportunity to **correct misinformation** or to **challenge ethnocentric and racist interpretations**. Consequently, the existing body of research, which normally provides a reference point for new research, must be open to reassessment.

Knowledge that is transmitted orally in the cultures of Aboriginal peoples must be acknowledged as a valuable research resource along with documentary and other sources. The means of validating knowledge in the particular traditions under study should normally be applied to establish **authenticity of orally transmitted knowledge**.

In research portraying community life, the **multiplicity of viewpoints** present within Aboriginal communities should be represented fairly, including viewpoints specific to age and gender groups.

Researchers have an obligation to understand and observe the **protocol concerning communications** within any Aboriginal community (p.2, my emphasis).

The last two principles relate to standard ethical practice:

Researchers have an obligation to observe **ethical and professional practices** relevant to their respective disciplines.

The Commission and its researchers undertake to accord **fair treatment** to all persons participating in Commission research (p.3, my emphasis).

The focus on the recognition, inclusion and validity of Aboriginal knowledge, values and perspectives creates a space for Aboriginal people previously unacknowledged in research. In the way these principles are articulated, outside researchers are made aware of what is important to pay attention to in their relationship with Aboriginal peoples: distinct and multiple views are present; one's knowledge base cannot be taken for granted; oral knowledge, emanating from

Aboriginal languages, functions differently than an English-speaking text-based culture; a different way of communicating is operative and the way one communicates will affect the relationship. Based on these principles, researchers are then asked to reflect on a series of questions concerning Aboriginal knowledge. This self-focused process of questioning is reflective of Aboriginal ways of coming to knowledge where "truth is internal to the self" (Monture 1995:217). Similar to the way elders teach, researchers are not told what to do but are assisted in the process to understand their responsibilities.

These guidelines concerning Aboriginal knowledge affected the way I thought about the research for this dissertation and they eventually were adopted as guiding principles. The current compatibility between participatory research purposes and conduct and Aboriginal cultural norms provided a basis for respect, that most basic principle for the establishment of any relationship. In the remaining sections of this chapter, I highlight some moments of the research partnership established for this study and the research design which developed as a result of the collaborative process.

### **Developing a Research Partnership**

Participatory research focuses attention on the relationship between the researcher and the researched. From my background in community development, I knew that the most important dimension in any developmental process was the quality of the relationship I was able to form with people I worked with. Unlike instrumental or merely task-oriented processes, I knew that opting for a participatory research approach would require a great deal of time, energy and investment of myself as a person not just as a researcher. It takes time to develop relationships



and for this reason, I began exploring the possibility of doing this study at the end of my first year in the doctoral program.

Experience prior to and during my involvement with AHWS helped me to understand that I could not research the AHWS partnership from simply a Western academic viewpoint, assessing it from an organizational or policy frame of reference; AHWS also constituted an exercise in biculturality which meant recognizing Aboriginal perspectives. Part of my "not knowing" in this instance had to do with whether or not the idea of this study would have any relevance for the Aboriginal community. My belief in praxis-oriented research (Lather 1986) and in participatory processes as counter-hegemonic meant that ethically I was only willing to undertake a project if it was of some social use to that community. Thus, I was prepared to let it go if it was determined otherwise. Not knowing where to begin, and working intuitively, I brought the idea for the study to the former Aboriginal co-chair from whom I had learned so much during my actual involvement with AHWS. She responded positively and saw possibilities I had not envisioned. I had been thinking of the study in vague and narrow terms as an example of a new way to develop policy. She, however, thought it would be useful from the broader perspective of assessing the longer-term implications of such Aboriginal-government partnerships.

At that point I could have approached the full Joint Steering Committee of AHWS with the idea but decided instead to approach both caucuses separately. As I observed earlier, ethics do not exist apart from the social and cultural worlds that locate and give them meaning. In this instance, the concerns of two distinct cultures had to be respected so I felt it was more appropriate to meet with each caucus first. The government caucus was receptive to the idea and

thought the AHWS story should be told but they also raised concerns about anonymity and confidentiality. In speaking frankly about the inner workings of a policy process they might be found in breach of the oath of secrecy that civil servants are sworn to, thereby threatening their jobs.

The Aboriginal caucus was resistant at first, and reminded me of the negative legacy of research by outsiders with First Nations. As I interpret the discussion, they were interested in finding out if there was a hidden agenda involved on my part. To know where I was coming from, I was asked about my past involvement with Aboriginal peoples and my politics. Their questions were a reminder to me that despite good intentions research can have unintended political consequences in addition to social and cultural effects. In presenting what was only an idea at that stage, I had consciously not developed a research proposal. And while I felt foolish having very little to present, I held to my conviction that in a participatory approach, a research proposal would have to be jointly developed. The group asked me to draft a workplan which could be reviewed.

With these different sets of concerns in mind, I developed a minimal workplan emphasizing a participatory research approach which I presented at a meeting of the full Joint Steering Committee (JSC) in September 1995. My rationale for doing the research was received positively. Participants then brainstormed a list of issues to be explored and the possible uses of such a study. They also affirmed that "participatory research was the only way to go." They felt the research would serve the purpose of documenting a developmental process which could be shared, primarily but not exclusively, with other Aboriginal organizations engaged in community development and policy work. To this end, they asked that I develop a written chronology of the

process and that I write a report or manual as an outcome. They also agreed that the data collected could be used for a longer reflection in the form of a dissertation. The study itself was viewed as complementary to another study that was being designed by the JSC to evaluate the implementation of programs and services supported by AHWS. Having dealt with the substantive issues, they then asked "So what do you want from us?" My response: "A group of people from the JSC to work with me in developing a research proposal". At that point, eight people who had participated in the development phase volunteered to form a small working group, which in effect became a working sub-committee accountable to the Joint Steering Committee.

I was delighted with the outcome of this meeting for several reasons: the willingness, interest and ideas of the JSC were affirming of the project itself; the commitment of a number of their members to invest time in the project meant that a participatory approach would be viable; the creation of a sub-committee under the authority of the JSC established a clear line of accountability for myself and the small working group; and, by taking the project inside its structure, an important degree of ownership of the project was signalled by the JSC. Lastly, working this way for the purpose of research felt right because it was deeply congruent with the process of actually developing the Strategy as I had experienced it.

This early stage took eight months and I dwell on it for several reasons. Although I had participated in the development of AHWS, my location had changed to that of outside academic researcher. Establishing and maintaining trust is often noted as important to research relationships, but the process of becoming known and the dynamics of vulnerability involved are rarely discussed. By focusing attention on relationship-building I want to highlight this often

invisible yet crucial aspect of any research initiative. By taking the time to have the necessary conversations with all the stakeholders involved, assumptions and ethical considerations not previously anticipated can emerge. As the Royal Commission guidelines remind us, researchers involved in collaborative ventures are responsible not just for collecting data in a respectful manner but also for the very dynamics of the relationship itself, including conflict resolution (1993:7). To do less is to repeat the pattern of treating research subjects as objects. The level of confidence and comfort that participants experience in the research relationship helps to determine their ongoing consent and involvement in addition to the quality of the work a group is able to accomplish together.

It is also important to note that the working group was highly compatible. Although from diverse organizations and personal backgrounds, the members knew each other well from having worked together for over five years during the development phase. This inevitably led people to reminisce and share stories of both poignant and humorous moments of their past as well as present experience together. Van Manen (1997) notes the importance of these "hermeneutic conversations" for generating deeper understanding and insight (p. 100). The following captures the spirit in which we worked together as a research group.

...The structure of the conversational relation much more resembles the dialogic relation of what Socrates called the situation of "talking together like friends". Friends do not try to make the other weak; in contrast friends aim to bring out strength. Similarly, the participants of a human science dialogue try to strengthen what is weak in a human science text. They do this by trying to formulate the underlying themes or meanings that inhere in the phenomenon, thus allowing the author to see the limits of his or her present vision and to transcend those limits (cf. McHugh et al., 1974) (p. 100-101).

### **Designing research collaboratively**

The Research and Review Working Group, the name we chose for ourselves, had three basic tasks: to develop a research proposal for approval by the JSC, to oversee the data collection and analysis and to produce a public report based on the findings. I will provide a brief overview of each stage of the research process.

### **Creating a research design**

The first stage of designing the research began in October, 1995 and ended in February, 1996 when the JSC gave final approval to our proposal. During that period we met five times as a working group. All meetings were tape-recorded, transcribed by me and fed back to the group in summary form. Apart from serving as a record of our decision-making path, this practice proved to be extremely useful because as a group the participants brought varied perspectives and much rich analysis to what could have been a detached, task-oriented exercise.

At the first meeting, a number of basic assumptions and issues were clarified that helped to create a common project. For example, we decided that the Medicine Wheel should provide the framework for thinking about impacts of the AHWS partnership process. In terms of methodology, the group readily identified that it was important to "talk to people about their experience" thus a qualitative approach based on interviews with a wide range of individual participants was adopted as a central feature of the overall design. We also discussed the kind of report that would be most useful. The group did not want to set up AHWS as a prescriptive model but rather wanted reflections and learnings to be shared more as a guide to that particular experience of partnership with government. With these orientations in view, we began to fill in other aspects of the design.

This first meeting set a particular tone and rhythm for subsequent meetings. Although I always prepared agendas in advance on specific parts of the proposal to be developed, meetings took on a conversational tone that ranged widely between topics. In this regard, our process was very circular and seemed to defy a rational planning logic. The process was highly iterative and effective in that each time we returned to a topic, usually over the course of several meetings, we gained greater focus and clarity and were able to make decisions. In this way, all the pieces of the puzzle eventually fell into place. The final proposal as approved by the JSC is contained in Appendix 1.

Rather than re-iterate the details of the research plan, I will discuss two key design issues which exemplify our working process. The first issue concerns "the research question". Following conventional logic this question usually needs to be resolved first in order that methodology, sample, and other issues flow conceptually from the focus of study. However, the working group, including myself, had a very difficult time trying to fit what we wanted to understand into that kind of framework. The formal question we eventually arrived at was:

How was the design and development of the AHWS similar to and/or different from other social policy making processes impacting Aboriginal communities and was it more effective than other processes? (Appendix 1, Research Proposal, p. 1)

Members of the working group clearly believed that the AHWS process was unique and different and that in its uniqueness and difference lay the reasons why it is was more effective than anything they had experienced before in terms of Aboriginal-government relations. Yet to frame the study in those terms felt too "subjective" so the above language was adopted. The revolving conversations on the issue, however, revealed that what we were really trying to do was to study a complex, unique phenomenon and informally, at least, we adopted a phenomenological

approach to the topic. This became most apparent after we dispensed with the formal question and began to discuss the themes for the interviews. A number of themes had been circulating in an unfocused way through the stories and recollections of the group as we discussed various aspects of the design. The day we decided to "name" the themes, we began by reviewing the list of topics the JSC had brainstormed initially. In our first meeting as a group, we had added other themes until the list felt complete. This list is contained in Appendix 2. Several months later, in a very short period of time, the group was able to synthesize the list into four themes to be explored with participants: structural and organizational features, strategic and transformative events, cultural practices, and working relationships. In effect, these themes constitute an analytical construct to uncover the major dimensions of the phenomenon of the joint process, including but not limited to its difference, similarity, and effectiveness. Essentially, the research group wanted to leave participants free to talk about the AHWS experience in their own way on their own terms while providing some structure and focus through the introduction of these themes.

Following a pilot test <sup>6</sup> and after the first few interviews were conducted it was very apparent to me as the interviewer that not only were these themes very useful in helping people to reflect on their experiences, they also flowed very naturally in the order they were asked. Respondents often anticipated the next theme before it was introduced. Only one change was made to the original interview schedule. During the fourth interview, one participant had volunteered some advice should others wish to create or engage in a similar process. The "advice" offered had the effect of summarizing what that person thought was most salient about the experience. I added this as a fifth theme for all subsequent interviews and it proved to be both

effective and insightful. It often added clarity and meaning to issues discussed in earlier portions of the interview.

The second design issue concerned "who" should be interviewed. Early on in our meetings, we brainstormed an initial list of over 120 potential key informants. Given the large number of organizations and ministries involved in developing the Strategy, the group was clear that the study required interviews with at least one member, if not two, from every organization that had participated in order to have a representative sample and a broad cross-section of perspectives. An implicit principle here was a respect for diversity which is compatible with the RCAP guidelines and with qualitative research approaches in general. Qualitative approaches operate from a heterogenistic epistemology which *increases* complexity, diversity, and structure with the effect of increasing the amount of data and thus an increase in understanding (Reason 1981: 242).<sup>7</sup> Starting from the "whole" list helped to delineate "types" of participants at a subsequent meeting: those who participated directly in joint meetings, influential people who impacted the process but were not direct participants, politicians in leadership positions who affected decision-making at crucial moments, and elders who played a special role in terms of guidance.

This delineation helped to narrow the list to 62 people which we considered was still too large. However, later on, we were able to develop very specific criteria for choosing potential informants. For representatives of the JSC we determined that we would select people who had been involved for at least one year and from within this group, optimally people who had participated in both the development of the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy and the Aboriginal Health Policy of which there were a significant number. Others who had been



involved through several phases of either initiative were also considered a priority. A list of eight potential interviewees at the level of ministers, deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers from the four co-lead ministries of the Ontario government was also identified. Similarly, several key Aboriginal chiefs and leaders who had played a significant role in political decision-making were suggested. Lastly, the working group decided that two elders, one from each initiative, who had provided guidance during the developmental process would be sought out.

Allowing for the fact that not every potential informant would be accessible or able to participate, we aimed for approximately 45 interviews. In the end, 37 people consented to interviews, with one person withdrawing from the study after her interview. However, in addition, one person chose to submit a written reflection based on the interview themes, so the total number of transcripts remained at 37. Of the total number of participants, 28 had been involved directly as representatives at the joint table, 7 had been involved in leadership positions, and 2 had served as elders. Those interviewed included representatives from all of the 8 participating Aboriginal organizations and 9 out of 10 government ministries thus achieving a broad cross-section of views. Excluding myself, of the total sample an equal number of 18 Aboriginal and 18 government representatives participated in the study. Although not pre-determined, in terms of gender, it also turned out that in each group, 13 women and 5 men participated for a total of 26 women and 10 men. This figure is representative of the total population involved and reflects the highly significant involvement of women in this particular policy-making initiative.

## **Gathering Data**

Once the research proposal and the university's human subjects review were approved, I began collecting data. This took place over a seven month period from March-September, 1996. It was understood that I would be the principal researcher for the purpose of the dissertation and also because the members of the working group did not have the time to do the actual data collection. However, we continued to meet throughout this period, with the group providing guidance and support on both substantive and practical issues. During the approval process, they recommended that the JSC provide financial support for the transcription of interviews and this enabled us to hire two assistants. Furthermore, the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres volunteered office space and provided logistical support to one of the young Aboriginal assistants. In addition, several ministries and organizations made their files available to me from which I was able to construct a detailed chronology of the events of the five year developmental process.

The JSC had requested that I develop a detailed chronology so that there would be "an inconvertible record of events" or basic agreement regarding the facts. Given the complex politics contained with the JSC, such a consensus was essential as a starting point for further analysis and interpretation. It enabled me to review the written record and the path of decision-making. The working group also felt that the chronology would help to jog people's memories for the purpose of the interviews. The JSC approved the chronology in March before the interviews began (Appendix 3). In terms of substantive matters that we dealt with as a group during this phase, I will highlight two issues. The first relates to the interpretation of a contentious event while the second concerns the "ownership" of data.

During the interviews, the vast majority of respondents identified that the merger of the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy and the Aboriginal Health Policy into one strategy was a major strategic event. During the course of the interviews, it became evident to me that almost two years later there were still unresolved feelings about it and very divergent positions which made it difficult to interpret. In our planning as a working group we had left open the possibility of doing a focus group "to clarify major disparities in perceptions or experiences on key issues arising from the interviews" (Appendix 1, research proposal, p.4). In discussing this issue with the working group, we determined that a focus group would be appropriate in this instance. The focus group was held at the end of June, once the majority of interviews had been completed. Unfortunately, the timing of the meeting before the summer break meant that a number of people were not able to attend. The five people who did attend represented largely one position so that the meeting did not produce any further insight or resolution. In retrospect, I have wondered if a more representative focus group could have produced a constructive result. If the issue remained unresolved for individuals, a focus group could have felt threatening and confrontational. People had spoken very freely and frankly in one on one interviews where confidentiality was respected. While the issue of interpretation remained to be resolved, this situation showed me the wisdom of adopting individual interviews as the primary vehicle for gathering data.

The second issue concerns the "ownership" of data; an issue which emerges in a particular way when engaging in a participatory research process. Macauley (1994) states that

The trickiest questions in full partnership surround ownership of the data and publication of results. To date, the researcher has had complete control over data and results but, in a partnership, the community expects control over the data too (p.1889-1890).

The issue of "ownership" emerged in two different instances during the research process. During the data gathering, it occurred to me that while I was using it for multiple purposes, the data did not belong me. It really belonged to the participants themselves and to the Joint Steering Committee. An information clearinghouse, supported and funded by AHWS, had just opened and I wanted to explore the possibility of contributing the transcripts of interviews (with identifiers removed) to that community-based resource. From my perspective, two principles of historic import to Aboriginal peoples were involved here: use vs. ownership and reciprocity vs. "taking without giving back".

In discussion with members of the working group, people felt that anonymity and confidentiality superseded the possibility of making the data available in a public form other than through the report and the dissertation. The group's rationale was not a legalistic one but rather concerned the nature of the relationship between myself and the participants, many of whom I knew from my previous involvement; the group deemed that the trust vested in that relationship should be protected. Secondly, while people had spoken to me as individuals they also had been or still were representatives of organizations. It was important to not jeopardize and to be sensitive to ongoing political relationships.

In raising this possibility I had also been aware that the non-proprietary nature of sharing knowledge in a traditional Aboriginal context was an important principle. Dockstator (1993) states that "the cultural values attached to Aboriginal epistemology dictate that the information used not be attributed to any one source or person" (p.9). Culturally opposed views with respect to "ownership" of knowledge meant that what worked in one context could be abused in another. I accepted the guidance of the group.

The question of "ownership" arose a second time when we had to identify the authors of the report. Coincidentally, I had been invited to write a book chapter on the Strategy and had brought forward that invitation to the Joint Steering Committee. Their concerns related to control over what was written about their work by non-members. The committee also wanted to ensure that materials be available without hindrance of copyright for distribution and use as resources in communities. The publications policy, which emerged as a result of dialogue on the issue, provides for the options of co-authorship or authorship in collaboration with the Joint Steering Committee. While some researchers object to the process of submitting their work for review on the grounds that it restricts intellectual freedom (Macaulay 1994: 1890), my experience to date has been the opposite. I find the comments of others to be a helpful check on accuracy and my own bias.

Ultimately, both these concerns relate to the difficult question of interpretations made by outside researchers, which as stated at the beginning of this chapter is deeply warranted with respect to Aboriginal peoples and to all oppressed groups. While the participatory approach per se did not resolve this issue for me, the collaborative structure itself provided a forum for open dialogue that helped all of us to think through the issues. This supportive context made it easier for me as a researcher to decide how to handle concerns when opposed views exist and there is no consensus. Referring back to the issue of the merger, for example, it taught me how to avoid making interpretative judgments. Going against the grain of Western writing where one is expected to make such judgments, in this situation I believe it was and is more respectful and insightful to present the multiple interpretations as they exist. Here, the Royal Commission's ethical principle of giving due respect to all views or positions proved to be an important

guideline. This practice does not preclude my own interpretation but rather acts as a check against making judgments.

### **Writing the Report**

By way of concluding this chapter and providing the immediate context for Chapter Five, I will close with two comments concerning the last phase of the research process which involved writing the report for the JSC. When I finished gathering the data I had amassed over 800 single-spaced pages of transcript. At this point, the working group said to me, "Okay, go away now and write!" During the interviews I had used a teaching of the Medicine Wheel which the working group had developed to provide an overall conceptual framework and in particular to explore the theme of working relationships. As stated in the original research proposal:

The Medicine Wheel addresses impact on four levels: the individual, the family, the clan, and the nation. Viewed as a whole, these four elements constitute the community. The assumption is that everyone who participated in the design and development of the AHWS was impacted by the process, and change occurred as a result of those impacts.

For the purpose of this study, individuals will be treated as individuals; family will constitute caucuses, sub-committees, working groups i.e. parts which are not the whole; clan will be understood as the organizations/ministries belonging to the Aboriginal Health Policy Working Group and the Aboriginal Family Healing Joint Steering Committee and the workings of the Working Group and Committee; and nation will refer to those impacts beyond those two structures. (Appendix 1, p.2 )

I now employed that teaching to help me condense and organize the data to write the first analysis of this policy-making exercise. In the second analysis which appears in Chapter Seven, I have used a different teaching to delve more deeply into the dynamics of the process.

The preceding discussion of "ownership" impacted how I would write the report.

Interviews had been designed by the working group to encourage participants to share their experiences in a largely open-ended format. Intended to be widely accessible, the report reflected that design. While respecting confidentiality, the use value of the report lay precisely in recapturing the lived experience. In adopting a narrative approach to telling the story, it is the words of participants that fill the pages of the report.<sup>8</sup> Readers are encouraged to use this particular experience not as a model or framework but rather as a place from which to reflect on their own experiences.

With the publication of the report in June, 1997 the formal research partnership ended. From my perspective, two things had been accomplished by means of it. As a practitioner, my original intention to initiate a reflection process with other participants on this significant experience was fulfilled. Secondly, in conducting this research, a responsibility to act in solidarity was met by "giving back" to the people involved and to a wider audience, especially the Aboriginal community. What remained was to fulfill a third obligation to myself and to the academy: by means of the data collected to engage in a sustained and deeper reflection on the AHWS experience. In terms of this dissertation, that process is initiated in this chapter by recounting the story of the research partnership which produced the data. In doing so, it meets a responsibility to provide for accountability and transparency in research practice. With this understanding in place, we turn now to Part 2 of this dissertation which focuses on AHWS as a case study of partnership and dialogue.

## ENDNOTES

1. Lather (1986) articulates the four basic assumptions of positivism as:

(1) the aims, concepts, and methods of the natural sciences are applicable to the social sciences; (2) the correspondence theory of truth which holds that reality is knowable through correct measurement methods; (3) the goal of social research is to discover universal laws of human behaviour which transcend culture and history; and (4) the fact-value dichotomy, the denial of both the theory-laden dimensions of observations and the value-laden dimensions of theory (n. 7, p. 260).

2. Yet simply adopting a qualitative method may not move research beyond positivist assumptions. Reason and Rowan (1981) state:

The problem with these methods is that they only move halfway towards a new paradigm: while seeming to offer an alternative they are in many ways stuck with the outmoded assumptions of positivism. Qualitative methods as they have been traditionally used are quite different from the notions of collaborative, experiential, heuristic, endogenous, and participatory research... (1981:xx).

For example, with regard to the qualitative approach of "grounded theory", Reason and Rowan state:

Many researchers claim to practise grounded theory, and the work of Glaser and Strauss has been enormously influential, although few researchers practice this method with the rigour which the originators advocate. But the main point is that although we think there is a lot in these two books, and would recommend the would-be researcher to read them carefully, we would also ask her to read them critically, because this is *not* new paradigm research. Grounded theory is an excellent example of a qualitative research approach which stays firmly within the old paradigm, and which stays, in terms of the Hegelian analysis, at the social 'objective' level. None of the questions which are emphasized in this book about research as a collaborative, experiential, reflexive, and action-oriented process are of primary concern to Glaser and Strauss. The questions they seek to answer are solely what Rowan calls efficiency questions (Chapter 9). (p. xx).

3. Participatory research is not without its critics. In his own words, Frideres (1992) offers a particularly "harsh review of the participatory research model" from an explicitly positivist perspective (p. 10). His main critique appears to be that by not following the rules of Western science, participatory research dissolves into a naive, ideological bias (p. 7, 8). While I find many of his claims to be grossly unsubstantiated, my own position is that participatory research per se does not place restrictions on or advocate the methodology to be employed, whether qualitative, quantitative or a combination of both. Science in the form of rigorous analysis and transparency are values that I highly support. In other words, one does not have to be a positivist to be a good researcher or scientist. It is my view that issues of validity pertain directly to the type of



methodology employed and must be judged from within the terms of the constructs which support a particular methodology. It is both illogical and unreasonable to judge a qualitative study on quantitative terms and vice versa.

4. Regarding the effectiveness of participatory research in Aboriginal communities, Castellano (1993) states that

(they) have proven to be effective in various projects mobilizing Native people to analyze their experience, articulate indigenous knowledge, and devise strategies to meet their needs (Castellano 1983; Jackson and McKay 1982). The problem of how to integrate the products of participatory research into the ongoing life of the minority community has been more resistant to solution, at least in the short term...Participatory research methods have been particularly effective in stimulating self-directed change in small-scale societies. For purposes of Native development in Canada the challenge now is to adapt these methods of analysis and decision making to the larger context of regional community networks, intersocial relations, and institutional development so that local participatory action may be complemented and enhanced (p. 146, 154).

5. A new policy statement entitled "Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans" was issued in August, 1998 by the Tri-Council (MRC, NSERC and SSHRC) governing university-based research. Section 6 constitutes a brief statement regarding "Research Involving Aboriginal Peoples" which includes suggested "good practices". However, the authors note that discussion with Aboriginal organizations is still necessary before the Tri-Council establishes policies in this area.

6. For the pilot test, I asked a former participant from an Aboriginal organization to interview me. This person was now a graduate student and was not included in the list of participants to be interviewed. This test had the added advantage of allowing me to clear out my own thoughts as a former participant before I began interviewing others.

7. Reason (1981) contrasts heterogenistic research processes to traditional Western research based on a 'homogenistic' epistemology and a belief in the existence of a singular truth. Citing Maruyama's critique (1978), he reiterates the homogenistic premises that

If people are informed, they will agree...Objectivity exists independent of the perceiver. Quantitative measurement is basic to knowledge (p. 78). (p. 242)

Similar to the postmodern critique, Reason offers the following comment with regard to heterogenistic research processes:

In terms of research, accepting, allowing, encouraging, and celebrating heterogenistic viewpoints will lead to an increase in our understanding. Bateson (1979) similarly points out that an increment of knowledge may result from

multiple versions of the world (p. 242).

8. "Working Together: Reflections on the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy." A Report produced by Suzanne Dudziak in conjunction with the Joint Steering Committee of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy. Toronto. 1997.

## **PART TWO: The Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy as A Case Study**

### **Introduction**

The second part of this dissertation examines the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy as a case study of partnership and dialogue in policy-making involving relations between the government of Ontario and Aboriginal organizations in the province. Part One laid a foundation for understanding this case study through an examination of the socio-political issues surrounding a post-colonial co-existence. A tentative ethical framework of interdependence based on a dual responsibility to recognize difference and to act in solidarity was established. The implications of this ethical framework were then discussed in relation to research. Participatory research was advocated as one approach that can respond to the ethical implication of interdependence, namely joint practice, dialogue and a respect for different knowledges in different forms. The research practice upon which this study is based was then discussed in relation to this approach. With this contextual background established, we are now in a position to examine the case study.

In Part Two, the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy is examined through two tellings of the AHWS story; *tellings* provide a qualitatively different framework than *findings* (Poland 1995: 292). These tellings or interpretations of interpretations are based on interviews with participants and background documents. The first telling in Chapter Five provides an overview of the design and development of AHWS. As a complex exercise in policy-making, this telling provides the basic background necessary for understanding the dimensions of the story. Before proceeding to the second telling in Chapter Seven, Chapter Six discusses the

learning process that led to the second telling and the analytical framework upon which it is based. The second telling of the AHWS story in Chapter Seven constitutes a substantive interpretative analysis which focuses on the dynamics of joint policy development in order to illuminate the deeper structure of the process which produced it. While Chapter Seven concludes the study of the case in Part Two, further reflections are contained in an Epilogue that weaves together significant insights from the case analysis with the core theoretical orientations discussed in Part One of this dissertation.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

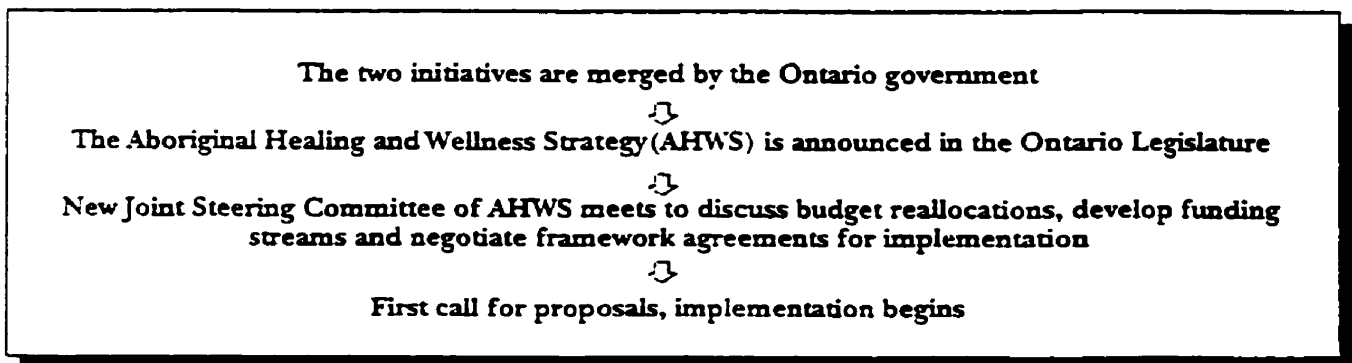
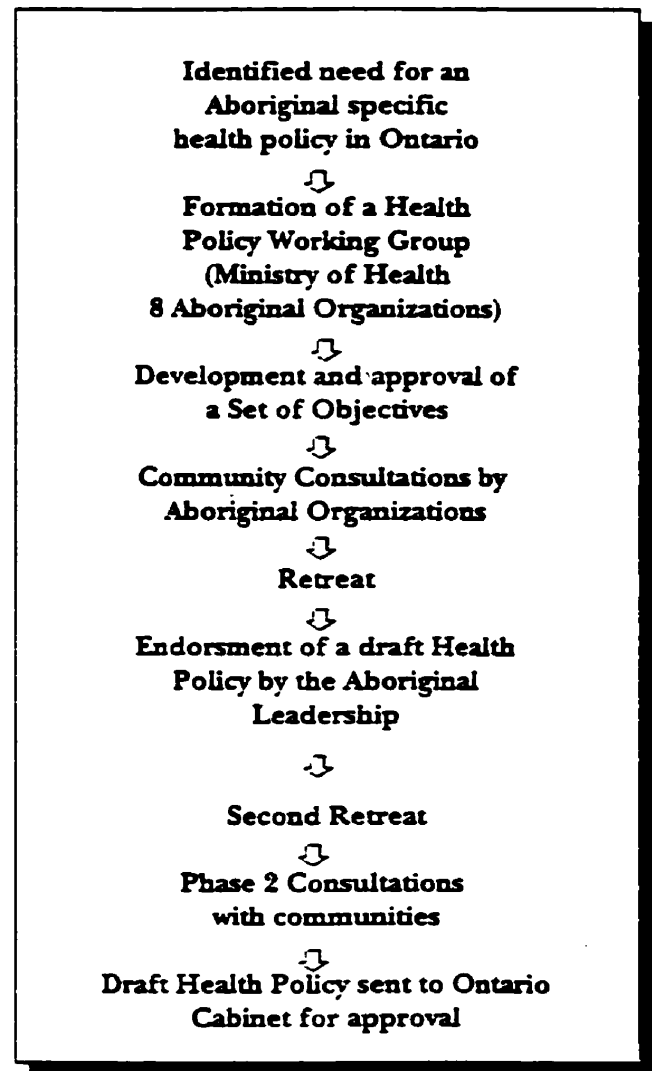
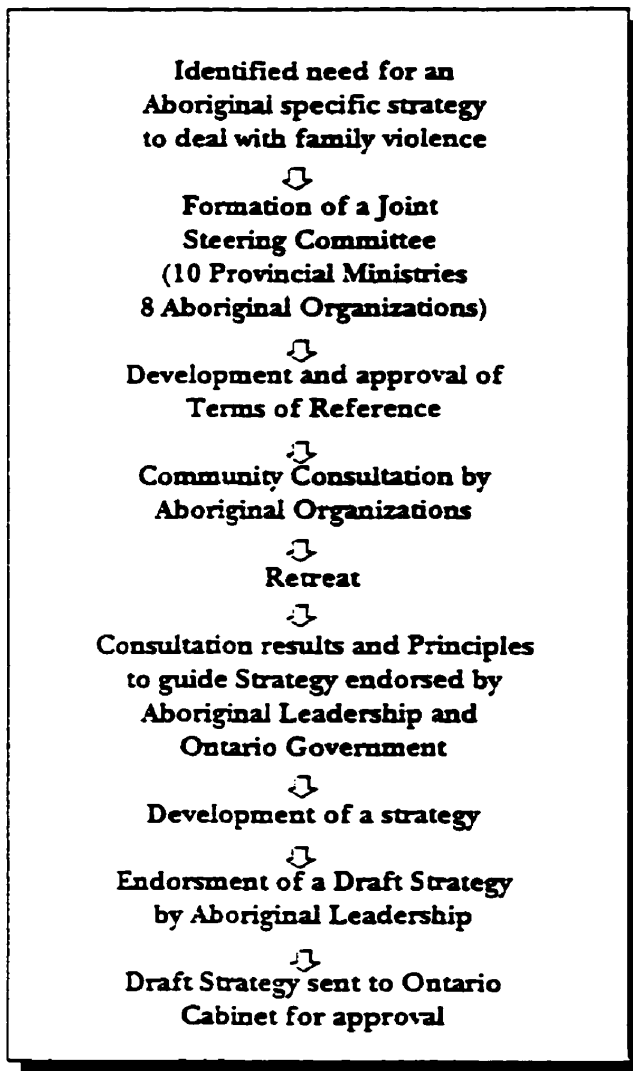
### **A Story in Three Parts**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of the development and design of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy. I tell the AHWS story in chronological fashion using a general framework of early beginnings, conditions of partnership, the consultation phase, and the strategy/policy development phase to describe each of the two policy initiatives: the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy and the Aboriginal Health Policy. The third part of the story focuses on the final approvals stage when the two exercises were merged to form the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy. A chart highlighting the developmental phases of AHWS is contained on the following page.

In providing this overview I use the words of participants to tell the story. Thus, unlike other academic writing, quotes are not used as highlights or evidence but rather are integral to the telling itself. In order to protect the personal identities of participants, individuals are identified only as either ministry or government representatives or as representatives from Aboriginal organizations. I have also avoided any form of gendered identification; because the majority of participants were women, the few men involved could be too easily identified.

## Developmental Phases



## **A. The Development and Design of the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy**

### **The Early Beginnings**

Every story has a beginning. The story of the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy<sup>1</sup> begins with the courage of a number of Aboriginal organizations working at the grassroots and at the provincial level to recognize family violence as a major issue affecting Aboriginal communities, to name it publicly, and to begin to act on it. In 1990, Manotsaywin released a report indicating that as many as half the families in the Sudbury area experienced family violence. At the same time, the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) released its report Breaking Free, documenting that 80% of Aboriginal women and 40% of Aboriginal children in Ontario were victims of family violence. An early participant from one of the Aboriginal organizations involved notes that as a result of ONWA's report:

*We were ostracized by the Aboriginal leadership. We took a lot of slams because Aboriginal men would come to us and give us heck because we had made it sound like all Indian men beat all Indian women...While we took a lot of heat, we also took compliments from a number of Chiefs, certainly from the women, and I think I must have sat for hours listening to people who were thankful, that finally it could open up, that a way was made so that now they could openly discuss problems in their community.*

Throughout the 1980s, the issue of domestic violence had moved onto the public agenda through the concerted efforts of many women's organizations. In 1986, the government of Ontario, under the leadership of Liberal Premier David Peterson, had approved a five year strategy for education and prevention programs related to wife abuse and sexual assault. This multi-ministerial effort was led by the Ontario Women's Directorate. A number of Aboriginal organizations in Ontario, including ONWA, received funding from this initiative to explore the issue and to develop programs. While the issue of family violence was by no means unique to

Aboriginal communities, there was an increasing awareness in government that solutions to the problem demanded different responses in Aboriginal communities than those which occur in mainstream society.

In its official response to the ONWA report, the Ministers responsible for Women's Issues and Native Affairs indicated that "consultation with Aboriginal groups and communities is a critical element in the development of a cohesive and culturally appropriate strategy in responding to Aboriginal family violence."<sup>2</sup> The Ontario Women's Directorate was mandated to form an Aboriginal sub-committee involving a number of ministries across government to begin to respond to the ONWA report. While this process was delayed by several months due to a provincial election which brought the NDP to power, subsequently an inter-ministerial Aboriginal sub-committee was formed. One government participant on that sub-committee relates:

*...there needed to be a separate Aboriginal inter-ministerial committee dealing with violence issues, and then a representation from that committee on the main inter-ministerial family violence effort. In producing that separation, and having been able to separate out an Aboriginal specific committee, we were able to then get some ministry people in other ministries more engaged in what the Aboriginal view was and what was required to make it work.*

*And then we began to do training on this inter-ministerial committee that was Aboriginal focused, brought in someone to come in and begin to explain to the ministry folks who were there, more of what the Aboriginal view was, what Aboriginal culture was, some of the particular issues that were faced in communities, some of the demographics, to bring these folks into an understanding of what was different that they were dealing with. That little core group is then the one that carried the ball...*

As a result of this awareness, the Ontario Women's Directorate's Aboriginal sub-committee began to look at other initiatives that had been developed with the participation of



Aboriginal organizations in the province. The one precedent referred to by participants at the time was a post-secondary education strategy that had been developed in 1988 by a joint effort of the Ministry of Education and Aboriginal organizations representing Aboriginal communities both on and off reserve. From an Aboriginal perspective, one participant comments on the similarities and differences between that strategy and the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy:

*I think the Aboriginal Education Council is successful, despite any number of people arguing back and forth about whether or not we should have combined [on and off reserve] initiatives...I think that the initiatives where they force us to work together, whether we like it or not, are ultimately more successful initiatives. I think there's more accountability. I think there's more integrity in terms of design than people simply taking the money and running. So I mean there's certainly similarities from the perspective of Education. It had similar resources too - 40 some million dollars over five years...*

*The thing about Education is a lot of our work is directed at mainstream institutions, colleges and universities, so it's a bit easier to come together because it's not directed towards our own. There's this amorphous mass that needs to be somehow educated by us and trained by us and we control the money. So it's very different, from that perspective, than Healing and Wellness which is saying it's not an amorphous mass, it's our own. And that makes it play a little differently.*

The government's Aboriginal sub-committee began to make informal contacts with Aboriginal organizations in the province to explore the possibility of developing a collaborative response to the issue. In response to invitations by government, 7 Aboriginal organizations came together with representatives from the Ontario Women's Directorate and the Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat and 7 other provincial ministries in July, 1991 to explore the possibility of working together. <sup>3</sup>

## **Conditions of Partnership**

At the first meeting, the Aboriginal organizations set out a number of pre-conditions which would have to be agreed upon before they would engage in a joint process with the Ontario government. The prior conditions included that:

- the initiative be Aboriginal focused and directed, with government playing only an administrative role
- the initiative be action-oriented, long-term, and broad in scope allowing for an examination of root causes and for communities to address healing in a wholistic way, understanding that this would be a long-term process beyond the life of the government in office
- there be an Aboriginal co-chair and that the Aboriginal organizations have input into where the lead responsibility in government would lie
- there be time and resources for an Aboriginal caucus meeting prior to joint meetings
- while a strategy was being developed, responsiveness to immediate needs not be jeopardized but enhanced <sup>4</sup>

The implications flowing from these conditions were also clearly stated. It was noted that "implementing an Aboriginal focus will require basic change in Aboriginal-government relationships and that the differences in perspectives between the parties can best be dealt with openly as they surface. It was further emphasized that "maintaining an Aboriginal focus may require basic change in the conventional process of developing policy."<sup>5</sup>

There was also substantial discussion at that first meeting regarding the need to consult with Aboriginal communities in order to develop a strategy and about the funding and resourcing required to carry that out. It was agreed that the ministries involved would seek funding to augment what was presently available for consultation.

The ground rules defined at this first meeting had far-reaching implications for both the Aboriginal and government caucuses involved and for how social policy relating to Aboriginal peoples would be developed in Ontario over the next few years.

A participant from an Aboriginal organization discusses the change implied in moving from an ad hoc to a more formalized, all-inclusive approach:

*In the past it was done this way, very one to one. If you are on somebody's calling list, you got the call -- this might be going down, would you like to participate, send representatives? Those type of approaches basically ceased to exist once Aboriginal Family Healing came about because suddenly they were something very collective, something very all inclusive, with its failings too but it began a new approach. The change was necessary.*

Another participant from an Aboriginal organization observed the shift in power relations which was necessary to enable a joint process to happen:

*Initially when we started on this, it was pretty much entirely different than anything else that had been done that I have been involved with, and certainly most of the people on both sides of the table, both Aboriginal and government had been involved with, in that it really was aimed at a joint process. It was the first time the expectation was reiterated time and time again to the government to the point where they finally came to believe it themselves, that they had responsibility then for what was created at the table and for bringing it back and explaining it, understanding it, and selling it. And everybody that was at the table had to do that within their own organizations, but also within government. So that was somehow different in some ways because they were used to trying to lead by the nose and in this case they had to come to understand what the nose was and then allowed themselves to be led in many ways. I don't know if that's a great analogy but it was really different. Of course, there was a climate at the time that really promoted that too, politically, because of the Statement of Political Relationship and other things.*

A few weeks after the first joint meeting, Premier Bob Rae had signed jointly with the First Nations leadership in Ontario a Statement of Political Relationship. The Statement was Ontario's formal recognition that "the inherent right to self-government flows from the Creator

and from the First Nations' original occupation of the land" and that "the relationship between Ontario and the First Nations must be based upon a respect for this right".<sup>6</sup> It was the first time any government in Canada had formally recognized the inherent right of Aboriginal self-government.

While the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy was never conceived or constructed as part of the agenda for formal government to government negotiations, it nonetheless benefited from the sympathetic political climate fostered in government at that time. In practice, civil servants were encouraged to adopt new modes of interaction, treating Aboriginal peoples as partners in government initiatives affecting them. It further suggested that more formalized, cooperative approaches be developed which included the negotiation of issues, not just consultation.<sup>7</sup>

Although not asked about the impact of the Statement of Political Relationship, most participants acknowledged the influence it had on the Aboriginal Family Healing joint process.

The following is a sampling of comments from government participants:

*R1: I think the Statement of Political Relationship had a huge effect on the ability of this sort of thing to happen. Even though I understand there was a wide variety of understandings about what it actually meant within the N.D.P. party itself. Nevertheless, it was there, it was something to hang our many hats onto, even a beginning point for understanding that. So I think that at brief shining moments it did sort of level, well maybe not level, but at least bring the playing fields closer together than they had been for some time I understand. As I said, there was political will.*

*R2: My feeling was that most of us tried whenever possible to behave as if we were in a government to government negotiation. We had to remind ourselves of that a lot because government no matter what it says can be very imperious and overbearing about what its rights are and what it can keep secret and what it can't. But on the whole I would describe the group as being cautious or wary allies; I mean the people who were actually at the table. Many of us wanted the same thing. We were disagreeing occasionally on timetables and routes to the*

*destination. But I don't think there was very much disagreement on the actual destination.*

*R3: I think that because it was close in time to the negotiation and the conclusion of the Statement of Political Relationship and the government to government relationship, expectations on the Aboriginal community were very high in terms of that this will be different than business as usual in terms of the role that they will have in the relationship with government. And I think for the middle level or low level bureaucrats who sat at the table they were in a way caught in the squeeze because I think by and large that they were sort of trying to do their best job, but from a government point of view operating in a vacuum of how to concretize the Statement of Political Relationship. So I think we were all operating against that kind of back drop.*

*R4: The context of it, is really a sense fairly early on in the process by most of the government representatives that this policy was going to be developed by the Aboriginal people for the Aboriginal people, and that as differentiated from a lot of other policy pieces that just look at it being an exercise by the government trying to decide what's best for the people...And I think that sort of set the tone for all the differences that played out and it also may have been appropriate in the context at the time too, the government was fairly sympathetic to that approach and without both those features, both within the public service as well as with the government and the direction of the government really made a difference. In that sense, they both supported each other...There was a readiness to receive the message with people working in government. It was a very important issue to the community and to acknowledge that this has happened. The government's role in a sense was as a facilitator for work that needed to be done. So I think that got a sympathetic response and also, again, it helped set the stage for the process.*

In the course of subsequent meetings of the Joint Steering Committee on Aboriginal Family Violence,<sup>8</sup> as the group identified itself, terms of reference for a consultation and the development of a strategy were formulated and approved by all the organizations and ministries involved. In addition to the conditions noted above for engagement in a joint process, the terms of reference outlined a set of principles and accountabilities to which all members were to adhere in order to ensure successful outcomes.

Notable among the principles was the fact that all decision-making would be consensual. Many participants interviewed reflected on the cultural significance of this form of decision-making and its impact on the dynamics of being engaged in a joint process. In practice, consensus meant that people at the table would have the authority to make decisions. While this was viewed by the Aboriginal caucus as extremely important in terms of accountability, it clearly presented problems for a number of ministry representatives who did not have such authority. As one government member notes, it provided the first opportunity to reach consensus on a critical issue:

*Just the idea of jointly as a group putting together a terms of reference was a brand new experience for most of the people there. I think it was the first time that there was some real conflict. "What do you mean we have to get everyone's consent?" And then the issue came, "Well, how do we do that?" Because for the ministry folks the problem was, "We can't agree to anything here at this table, we have to take this back to our senior management, right up the pipe in our process, before we can give you any answer as to whether this makes sense. So how do I have the authority to sit at this table and even give any input into this draft today?" And it was the exact same problem for the Aboriginal caucus, both off-reserve and on-reserve saying, "We have our own process, we have to take this forward in our organizations." So that was a learning curve because it took both sides to a point where they said, "Oh, you know, to a certain extent when we're here we have to re-decide all of those problems and issues that we all have. We have to combine our efforts as best we can in this way to produce a product that we think we can all live with." But then we all recognized that it could fall apart at any minute because everyone of us still has to go back and get some consensus, some endorsement of what we've done here collectively. So that was a whole learning in terms of figuring out, "Oh yeah, we have these issues but it's not that they're impossible to resolve, we can do it. But it will take time."*

Government participants often reflected on the practice of consensus:

*R1: ...From the perspective of the Aboriginal communities, it worked mostly in practice. There were some organizations that from time to time had to go back, didn't come with vested authority. But other Aboriginal organizations really did seem to have the authority and the direction and the goals from their Chief and Council. I think it's because the vision around what family healing and the*

*process was to be about, had already been formulated by those Aboriginal organizations. It was already a shared understanding or vision...Where it broke down was on the government side, that government representatives had more or less trouble communicating to their hierarchy that they were to come there with vested authority to make decisions, and/or they came to the table themselves not wanting to do that, wanting to use the usual, you know, "I've got to back and check" routine and that way you don't have to accept the responsibility for anything that you're a part of...Part of what influenced the government working group was the response of the Aboriginal caucus at some of the joint steering committee meetings and the government caucus acted out. We couldn't act based on a consensual direction that we agreed upon or we didn't seem to be able to go back and discuss issues and the Aboriginal caucus would call us to task on procedural issues, and sometimes shame us into acting and adhering to the terms of reference.*

*R2: Achieving consensus was a very important thing and I think the fact that the Aboriginal folks saw that as a way they had always done business. That's the notion they presented, that we have to agree on everything before we make a decision about it. I think that was a very important notion to take through the process because it meant business; "There's no way you're going to get that money, you can't do this so there's no point in asking that." And I think it made everyone participate because I mean even if I went in and said, "Look I didn't get any feedback down the pipe, I sent it up but I didn't get any down. So I think you can understand from that, that they are going to say it's not a bricks and mortar issue so there will be no more dollars for this." And, you know, even that was accepted over time that was as good as it got and it did get a little better...I think as Aboriginal and government work together, it will get better. But I think the consensus issue is much more significant than we like to think because here in government we don't care what we get, majority say we'll do this so we do this.*

Another government participant comments on what happened when consensus was difficult to achieve and the learning which resulted:

*I think the Aboriginal co-chair just made us feel so guilty (laughter) that we would go around again to do something about it. Even that was valuable because just the big ability that she had, I mean you had to admire her, she really was great that way especially when you had sat in a caucus meeting an hour before, "We can't give in this way, and we don't have that money and there's no way they're even going to consider doing that." And then you come out of the joint meeting, yes, in fact you were now going back and doing a briefing note saying, "We need to do such and such and so and so." But I think that was important*

*because I think we learned to do more, we wouldn't have stretched that far had we not had to reach consensus and look good to everybody, because you know when you sit in a government meeting all you have to do is impress X ministry or whoever else you're working with, but here you had to make sure that all these Aboriginal agencies were happy too. It was really great. It was really a significant period for me, I learned a great deal.*

The terms of reference also identified some important principles regarding the consultation and the development of a strategy. It mandated the Aboriginal organizations to consult broadly with Aboriginal people affected by family violence in order to document their needs and to review the appropriateness of existing services, programs and policies. It also stated that the process and strategy would be coordinated and comprehensive based on a definition of Aboriginal family violence which addressed the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs of Aboriginal children, youth, adults and seniors. It indicated that such needs should be addressed in a flexible and culturally appropriate manner. With these ground rules in place and with funding from the provincial government, the Aboriginal organizations embarked on the consultation.

### **Doing the Consultation**

The consultation began in April, 1992 and resulted in the largest single consultation of Aboriginal people ever undertaken in Ontario. During the consultation, the views of over 6,000 people representing 250 communities were heard. As all participants agree, this was not business as usual:

*This process was different as it was not merely "consultation" as is used in many policy development practices, where government undertakes surveys/focus groups etc, and then behind closed doors government produces a consultation document, formulates and implements its recommendations; this was a "joint process"*



*where government and the stakeholder group representatives worked together at the same table to develop by consensus both the process and product, and where the stakeholders were resourced to do their own consultations; it was not organized by government.*

Such a shift in power relations challenged a number of the government participants. In particular, it meant letting go of a mindset which said that only uniformity in the way the consultation was designed and carried out could produce effective results. At a deeper level it meant that government had to respect that the Aboriginal organizations knew what they were doing. The Aboriginal caucus had been very clear in stating that each organization involved would design their own consultation on the basis that they knew best how to work with their own communities and that the diversity among communities necessitated different approaches according to different conditions and circumstances:

*In caucus we had the conversation about what consultation meant, how do you own it, who do you involve, that people had to be free in terms of their organizations to do consultation however they wanted. And I think that was a very important discovery, that we could be different and still be in a process, because our differences had always meant we had to have separate processes, that we couldn't have combined. So I think that was a significant factor.*

However, the Aboriginal caucus also felt resistance on the part of government representatives.

Two members comment:

*R1: I guess in the consultation phase the really critical happening was over a series of meetings getting the government to understand that their only participation in the consultation would in fact be funding it. You know, go find the money, come back, we'll consult, we'll give you the results. Other than that you ain't the law, you don't define the consultation, you don't participate in the consultation, you don't have any role except to be there.*

*R2: It was terribly difficult for government. They were involved in the designing of the interview instrument. We wanted to be consistent in the consultation and everybody was expected to cover at least the instrument that we designed, they*

*could do more but they couldn't do less. And just the development of the interview questions and the kinds of impact from getting them to understand not only what we needed in terms of financial resources, but how the needs differed not just according to organization but the organizations' individual community locations and things like that.*

The Aboriginal organizations did manage to convince government to allow them to do their own consultations according to their own ways of working based on the principle of diversity. Two government participants reflect on the tensions of moving from a homogenous to a heterogenous approach:

*R1: The fundamental difference, I guess, was that we were able to agree with the organizations that in this instance it was appropriate for the organizations to consult with the communities rather than the government to consult with the communities. Now, this was a significant ideological issue. This isn't a minor matter...And we had enough political support from our ministers that we could cause it to happen. If we hadn't had the political support, the support of the deputies, it would have been very, very difficult to say, well, okay, what we're going to now do is put up \$700,000 which we're going to give to eight organizations who are going to run their own consultations, based on their own designs and the way that they want to do it. They're not going to have stats that are all the same, they're not going to have the same questionnaires, they're not going to use the same approaches. What we're going to do is ask each organization to define what it is they're going to do, and agree that they're going to provide information that will at least match a set of our objectives within certain terms of reference to this, which we did. And, of course, it worked.*

*R2: A critical issue was how much of the process would be determined centrally and how much would be left to the individual organizations to sort out themselves. And I think there was some debate around that, and through the course of that debate it was somehow determined that this is how the consultation will be done. And people had doubts about that, how do we do this, and how do we do that? We were concerned about when we eventually rolled up the results, how it was going to actually be done technically, and reporting in entirely different ways. And we had done this exercise before and it's very difficult to get useful results. So there were some doubts about whether or not that could happen. But eventually I think there was sort of an agreement on the basis that if it was done in several different ways, in fact the results would be better because I think the rationale was that if you get the same product in several different ways,*

*come up with the same result, it would support the idea that the same kind of project could be done in different ways, that in diversity there is strength. So that kind of won the day, and then that I think sort of freed up, people felt more comfortable and felt they had more control over the process. The framework that was developed was a broad framework.*

As the Aboriginal caucus gained the power and resources they needed to do the consultation in their own way, Aboriginal values came to the forefront of the process. The following example was mentioned by a number of the participants:

*A number of organizations sacrificed what would be considered their fair share for consultation. In one organization, for example, understanding that the women in those communities would not be allowed to participate unless somebody would go into the communities and talk to them, and that couldn't happen without some of the other organizations changing their consultation method, and reducing the amount of funding they needed to do that. And they did it very willingly. That organization came up with three consultation models, explained that the cheapest one was where they consulted with the chiefs, the medium one was where they targeted people, and the most expensive one was with trained teams that would go into the communities and do consultation with the families in the community. And because the people in the communities often don't have a voice, a direct voice, specifically because of geography, there was a real support behind making sure those communities had resources for the consultation. That was significant.*

During these discussions, the Aboriginal caucus emphasized that much disclosure of abuse and violence would occur during the consultations and that government shared a responsibility with the Aboriginal caucus to respond and to follow through with a commitment to act once the lid on the pain had been removed.

*That was the other thing that the ministry people on the Joint Steering Committee were aware of, was that what they were going to be taking on was going to be really tough. There was going to be a lot of resistance in the communities and the Aboriginal representatives were very aware that it would probably result in a whole lot of behavioral stuff emerging. They predicted that there would be a real increase in the number of disclosures of violence and abuse as a result of the consultation process itself. That all happened and it's true. So it was like on the Aboriginal side there was a pretty good handle on what they were getting themselves into and the amount of work that it was going to entail to go out to that number of communities. They even included going, as you know, to a number*

*of the correctional institutions and facilities as well. There was really a lot of effort made to make the process as inclusive as possible, to make as much outreach as possible here.*

One of several Aboriginal respondents reflected on the impact the family healing consultation process had on communities:

*I think the communities have probably sat back and took a look at themselves to see what was happening within their communities because you can walk around with blinders on until something like this comes along. I know when we did the consultation for the family violence, that was an eye opener because it took a bit, you know, to get people talking and we did this in an open forum on all of our consultations. You get one talking about something and at first you know, there was five more standing behind waiting to say what they wanted to say about what they had experienced in terms of family violence. I think that was the biggest impact it had on communities, making them look at themselves and see, and not only in family violence but to see what is really needed in this community in terms of health and the family because it doesn't just deal with being sick, you know, physically sick or whatever, it's the whole person, the whole family, the whole community sometimes.*

Once the consultations had been completed by each of the Aboriginal organizations, the findings needed to be assessed and brought together in order to begin to define a strategy. While each organization was preparing its written report, the Aboriginal caucus decided it would be important to hold a 3 day retreat to facilitate that process among the full membership of the Joint Steering Committee. Almost all participants interviewed noted the strategic importance of what is simply known as "Elmhurst", the place where the retreat on the results of the Aboriginal Family Violence consultation took place. An Aboriginal participant comments on the purpose of the retreat:

*And so part of the design for Elmhurst was first to get people away from their frigging offices and tied to that sort of mentality that people bring to the table. But the second was to get people who had shepherded this research to own what their organization had come up with, and say okay your report says this, what do you mean in terms of the definition, what do you mean in terms of strategic*

*direction, what do you mean in terms of resource priorities, and what do you mean in terms of what can you expect as an outcome. And then it was a lot different. Then you got the discussion around colonization, you got the discussions in terms of here are some strategic approaches that we can talk about, about crisis intervention, about community support, about the sort of the things that became parts of the strategy.*

There were several breakthroughs at Elmhurst which set the stage for the development of a strategy. A participant from the Aboriginal caucus talks about the process of clarifying the conceptualization of the issues that the consultations produced:

*So I think there was this notion that there had to be a consultation, that our community had to see what it was, and they had to own it, and that meant defining what it was, how was it affecting them, what were their terms and conditions? And I remember a very lively conversation in caucus about OWD's definitions and how they just were not definitions that applied to the Aboriginal community in terms of wife assault, in terms of battering, in terms of child abuse, child sexual assault. And those were fine, but there was this constant discussion about what about the men, what about the men, and saying that it was all pervasive. And I remember this going back and forth in caucus, and caucus saying well we really need to focus on the people who are the weakest, and other side is saying, but our men are victimized by a larger society and then in turn victimize. And I don't think that we ever, ever, ever put that in the slot of saying those are the effects of colonization until we went to Elmhurst. Before that we were just having these nice conversations.*

The consultations and the discussion process afterwards acted as a vehicle for naming and owning the issues which in turn helped to frame the nature and scope of the strategy. It empowered the Aboriginal organizations in a way that enabled the strategy to be defined in Aboriginal terms. A shift from defining the issues in terms of family violence to a focus on family healing occurred and began to give a positive direction to the whole exercise:

*The other thing that did occur in terms of the shaping of the strategy was that mid way through the consultations some of the elders said, "This should not be about family violence, we're not here to talk about violence in our communities, we're here to talk about family healing, so that's what we really want the strategy to address, we want it to talk about our healing." And that was a major*

*transformation in the entire strategy which required us to re-configure what we were doing. Again, that was a growth or a movement away from what the OWD stuff was about at the time - perpetrators, wife assault, sexual assault. The addressing of those problems and issues and how you do education was where they were coming from. But this was more, "This is ours. If we're going to take this for ourselves and personalize what we're talking about here, then we're going to do it our own way. That's the way we want to see it, as a healing.*

As part of that naming process, the Aboriginal representatives developed a definition of family violence based on the collective experience revealed during the consultations:

The Aboriginal People in Ontario define family violence as consequent to colonization, forced assimilation, and cultural genocide, the learned negative, cumulative, multi-generational actions, values, beliefs, attitudes and behavioural patterns practised by one or more people that weaken or destroy the harmony and well-being of an Aboriginal individual, family, extended family, community, or nationhood.<sup>9</sup>

From this perspective, a broader understanding emerged in terms of the comprehensiveness of what was required to deal with the issue:

In order to address the issue, government must be clear on the understanding, experience and definition of family violence by Aboriginal People. This would include understanding the wholistic of the issue that Aboriginal family violence refers not to isolated, specific incidents of abuse, but rather to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual welfare of Aboriginal individuals, families, extended families, communities, and nations.<sup>10</sup>

As these understandings coalesced, people from the Aboriginal caucus began to gather strength from one another. A government representative present at Elmhurst noted:

*... As I recall just the sense of pride and energy within the group but I think particularly with the Aboriginal reps, about just how thrilled they were when the definitions emerged from the subgroup, like this is really great! There were a couple of tasks, and then we broke up into subgroups, and I just remember this tremendous energy and pride in arriving at a common definition, common understanding, that from that notion of "in diversity is strength", to see it actually come about.*

While people continued to draw on the learning from the consultations long after the

event, Elmhurst acts as a pivotal marker in the transition from consultation to strategy development.

### **Developing a Strategy**

A former government Minister who had fully supported the joint process reflected back on the significance of Elmhurst and its subsequent impact on government:

*It was quite dramatic. And it shifted in ways that became apparent in the other work these people were doing. I mean where I saw it most was as we went through the committee process. I mean having to go from that transformational experience into the rigid policy decision making process within government, it had changed people. People were asking why it had to be done this way. So it was very good. From our perspective it was very good. We were very, very pleased, the ministers who were most involved, I think. I think the civil service was less pleased because they didn't know how to fit it into their experience.*

"Not knowing how to fit it into their experience" is a major theme identified by both Aboriginal and government representatives during this next phase of the work. By now, there was little question of the commitment and good will on all sides to do something about the issue. The question now was two-fold: how to develop a strategy from the overwhelming needs identified in the consultations and how to do it together?

One Aboriginal participant identified this period as "chaotic". Part of the chaos had to do with changes in government representation at the time. For example, one government participant noted that while the same person was Aboriginal co-chair for three years, the person in the government co-chair changed eight times during that period. Other ministry representatives changed as well. Another part of the chaos had to do with government struggling to define its role in the process. An Aboriginal participant comments:

*I think on the side of the government there were a significant number of people changes in that period of time...I think they know technically what to do, how to prepare a policy document, how to take that document to cabinet, but I think what they didn't understand was their role in terms of the process. And because they didn't understand their role in the process, you have an Aboriginal community that's emerged from a consultation feeling fairly empowered, I mean we were feeling very depressed, you know, having all this weight on us, but I think that we received a very clear mandate from the communities to do something about violence -- to not hide it, to not lie about it anymore.*

*It was very clear that it was all the aspects of the life cycle, whether it was our children who were failing to thrive because parents didn't know how to parent or whatever, but all the notions around that were all there. And so I think you have all that, and I think have a very emotional, and even I would argue a spiritual response; a responsibility in the teachings for us to do something now that we know. And you've got a very physical and a mental response on the part of the government. And so you've got the Medicine Wheel covered, but a lot of the players in the government now didn't understand their role. They could understand it intellectually, and some of them even took into their hearts. I don't want to say they didn't feel what we were feeling, but I think our motivation, our sort of modus operandi, what we were bringing to this discussion, and the government was sort of bringing their heads and the fiscal, the physical realities, some of which were fiscal at the time, should have made for an incredibly synergetic process, should have.*

*But what happened was, because you had very key people leading on the government side who didn't understand their role, didn't understand how they were responding to the situation. You have them kind of bumbling around, and you have the Aboriginal community getting more and more and more solid about our understanding about what our consultations do. And so it would have been a classic environment where it could have been symbiotic because you've got the policy people saying okay here's how you generate policy you guys, and us being able to say here it is and just fit it into the slats. But because these guys couldn't decide who is their leadership, couldn't decide where they were going, they were always integrating new people, we didn't arrive at the same junctures. And so I think those are some of the reasons it was chaotic and I think it was a chaotic time.*

Another aspect of this period was recognizing the enormity of the issues involved. A decision was made to write a submission to the Ontario cabinet asking to go forward with strategy development based on the needs identified in the consultations. It signalled to government that significant resources would be required to begin to tackle the issues. A member



of the Aboriginal caucus states:

*It took several months I think for our caucus to be able to say, what's policy again, and for the government to say, we're in big. And that's why, at the end of that consultation, before we moved on into design, we went to cabinet and said to cabinet, you better know what's going on here because it's a lot bigger than any of us expected.*

One of the unique aspects of this particular process was that the Joint Steering Committee wrote this first cabinet submission together. While this exercise contravened the government's principle of cabinet secrecy and upset people in Cabinet office and while some respondents disagreed with the practice, a significant number of government participants agreed with it. A ministry representative reflects:

*One [transformative event] is the nature of cabinet secrecy. It's a fundamental principle of the parliamentary system that we operate with. We were tackling that fundamental principle. It's caused some people great consternation! ... People who are responsible for that secrecy function, they were really on the line for this. This is not doing things in the normal way! The practical element of it is, for lack of another way to describe it, the format of a cabinet submission. It doesn't matter what's on it, it's top secret paper, you don't tinker with it. The format that is on that paper that describes the policy making process, the steps, the reason, what is appropriate information, how it is forwarded, is an exceptionally powerful tool and a highly refined tool, that hundreds and hundreds of people have worked on for many, many years. So once you've put something through that particular instrument, you've gone through a policy making process that touches all of the requirements of that instrument. You have a very strong document because that's what it's meant to be. This is serious policy development.*

*So when we shared the format and the guidelines, the directions, what do each of these points mean, what's supposed to be written in here, how do you answer this -- what we were doing was sharing a very powerful tool, and that was transformative. I think that was transformative in a couple of ways. It was transformative because it meant we were able to take the data from the consultation, not filter it, and transpose it into this very powerful format as a joint arrangement. But on the other side of it, it transformed the organizations because at least those people that participated in it, were exposed to an entirely different kind of analysis. They were exposed to how government makes decisions, fundamentally makes decisions. And I think that's useful, I think that's a helpful*

*thing for people.*

From a different perspective, another government participant observed:

*So big deal, so you write the text. That was a perfect example of an inability to really do a true sharing. There was still this notion of the sanctity of certain cabinet confidentiality which we know in other things that's shared with interest groups. I mean I would be amazed if Cabinet and ministers haven't shared cabinet documents with key interest groups they align themselves with. But there were people who just freaked out. And I think a lot of the reason that happened was because there wasn't a strong person on the government liaison side to focus it and manoeuvre around that little blip. The bureaucrats weren't really savvy in terms of working it through on the bureaucratic side and that could have been easily, I mean easily, rectified.*

As the cabinet submission on the consultation began to make its way through the political approvals process, the Aboriginal caucus took the lead and dealt with the vacuum left by weak leadership on the government side. As government participants readily acknowledge, "There was a big gap of who in government would take the lead on it." The impetus for establishing a set of sub-committees to develop the strategy came from the Aboriginal caucus:

*Some of our younger types who are sort of go, go, go, and let's get this done and let's figure out this and that, that's when we decided on a series, a fairly elaborate process of subcommittees -- that we weren't going to be able to do the work otherwise. And that process in terms of subcommittees was going to at least take the sort of discussions down to a level where you don't have to worry about your role in the context of a whole strategic approach, you worry about your role in the context of this committee and the relationships became a little bit easier.*

*I think our part was getting easier and easier. Caucus was getting easier and easier, I remember that. We almost didn't need to caucus sometimes because we knew exactly, we were of one mindset, this is what we want. And so there wasn't a lot of negotiations in caucus like there were earlier, about the Indians want this, the off-reserve want this. You know what I mean? That didn't happen anymore in caucus. Now what happened in caucus is, how are we going to overcome these obstacles? They're our obstacles, they're not your obstacles, how are we going to overcome these. And we had very clear direction. And it didn't matter anymore if you were a Metis inmate who had been sexually assaulted, or you were a First Nations woman on a reserve who had been sexually assaulted, or you were a*

*child in a city. Do you see what I mean? We had all that.*

While relationships grew stronger and understanding coalesced in the Aboriginal caucus, one political organization representing the Chiefs of Ontario delayed signing off on the cabinet submission. They wanted assurance from the province that jurisdictional issues affecting First Nations and the federal government would not be jeopardized by agreeing to go forward with a strategy.<sup>11</sup> Once those assurances were given, the Chiefs Office did sign off. Nonetheless, different perspectives regarding a joint process that involved both on and off reserve organizations remained among the First Nations organizations represented at the table and among their political leadership.

Four mixed sub-committees worked on fundamental aspects of the strategy: a community needs working group met in the north and the south based on the recognition of substantive regional differences. It also contained a subset of people who developed an outline for an alternative justice framework for offenders. Another group worked on jurisdictional issues related to the federal government. Yet another small group took on issues related to roles and responsibilities and began to outline phasing for implementation. It was through this breakdown of tasks that the work accomplished was eventually consolidated into an overall framework.

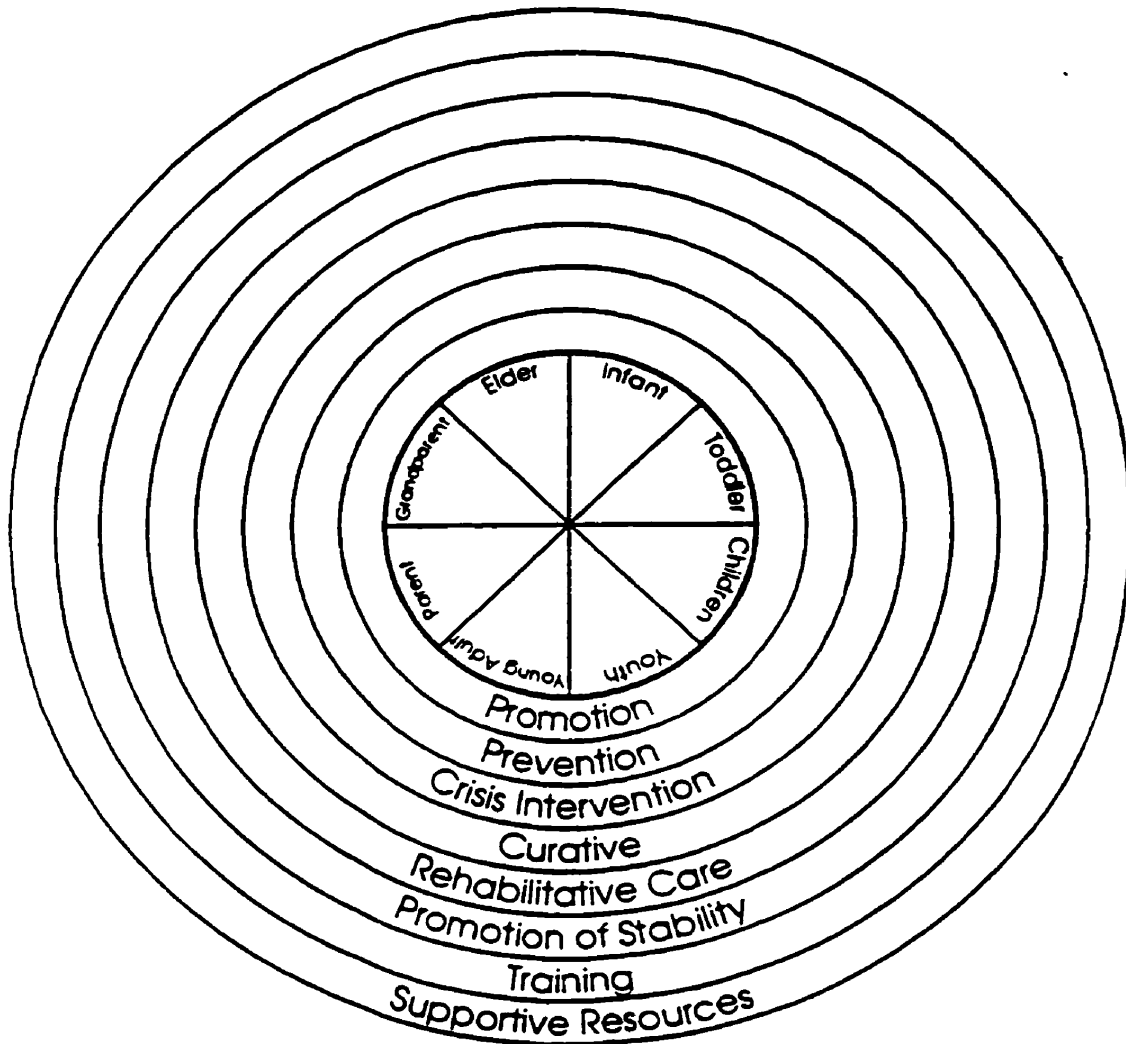
### **Features of the Design**

The design of the strategy contains some important features worth noting here. Firstly, community needs and types of services and programs required are expressed in an eight-phase continuum of care known as the Healing Continuum. Designed from teachings of the traditional Medicine Wheel, it also addresses all age groups contained in the traditional teachings of the Life

Cycle. These concepts are intrinsically whole and comprehensive and as such, constitute a cultural-based alternative to the way mainstream services are typically designed and delivered.

## Healing Continuum

### Identified Community Needs & Priorities



Secondly, rather than create a blueprint for communities to follow, the Joint Steering Committee was careful to provide a very broad framework which enables communities to define

their own starting points for addressing family healing from their own vantage points and unique set of circumstances. In this respect, rather than be directed by policy directions, the strategy is intended to be driven by communities themselves. One government participant uses the analogy of a list of ingredients to describe how the strategy creates space for communities to develop their own initiatives:

*When I described the Family Healing Report to communities, I talked about needing an ingredient list. It's like a cook book which tells you, here's how you make black forest cake, right? And so you make black forest cake. You might put icing, chocolate or white. But when you pick up the Family Healing Report, it tells you that you have flour, cocoa, lard or shortening or whatever, and sugar, and cherries, and other things. Well, you might decide to make black forest cake, you might decide to make brownies, you might decide to make a chocolate pie. You decide what you're going to make. And it's my favourite way of describing what the Strategy is.*

Thirdly, to facilitate this process, funding from various ministries is centralized into a pool of funds which is managed predominantly by the Aboriginal organizations involved. Co-management is defined as a transitional phase leading to full Aboriginal control over services and programs within the first five years of implementation.<sup>12</sup>

As may be evident, traditional Aboriginal knowledge played a seminal role in the design as well as the development of the Strategy. The role of culture was one of the four themes explored during interviews with participants and most participants viewed it as crucial. One Aboriginal person describes how a new wheel was born from the Medicine Wheel teachings:

*We decided we would do it a different way and then in the community needs group coming up with the healing framework was really significant. What happened there was we were struggling with words put to a vision and gave up, and just went with the vision and began to draw it in circles. Then everybody saw what was happening and everybody started pitching in ...And what developed was the framework and that vision is what became the focus of developing the rest of the document. It was all these stages and it still excites me.*

Other Aboriginal representatives highlighted the central role that Aboriginal knowledge and cultural perspectives played in designing the strategy. Two members of the Aboriginal caucus comment:

*R1: I think the whole discussion on the cultural approach, the medicine wheel teachings, to me was integral to the whole success of the strategy. And when that became understood by the participants, I think it kind of solidified the whole relevance of the strategy because it was kind of made by Indians, made by Indians for Indians, and supported by government. So I think that, to me, was probably the highlight of the whole strategy.*

*R2: I think spirituality was the creator of what we did and hopefully will be the end result, and when I say that it's almost like a pat answer. But I think it had such a large role to play, that each person's own individual view of their own spirituality was present. That the practices are different yes, but I think the goals are pretty much the same in a lot of ways, how we treat each other, how we feel and the other part of understanding spirituality which is not religious, right?*

*So from the culture we recognized that there were natural care givers that we had as people, say our elders, women especially that their role in the family, their role in being care takers, being the people that hold family units together, that teach about caring, and all the value systems that you need for relationship, I think that was part of the cultural component that we had to bring forward. When I see the healing continuum and when I look at something like rehabilitation, when I look at that it's rehabilitating our culture, it's bringing back the caring values, the taking care of our own extended family, using our land, the spirituality that we gain from the land that, that has to be a part of a component of healing, that without our spirituality and link to the land we're lost. When I look at the teachings, the heritage, the identity that young people need, they need to know who they are as Aboriginal people.*

Although from a very different perspective, comments from ministry representatives also indicate the impact that Aboriginal culture played in this policy development process:

*Normally when we do background on a policy issue, it's usually just very superficial and really doesn't wouldn't go back in time to any great degree except beyond the first policy statement which was made around that particular issue. But this went back for hundreds, and hundreds and hundreds of years and I think,*

*you know, having an elder there at all the meetings, actually the first one I met I was just truly impressed with her...They brought dignity and respect to the setting. But I also think they kept us focused because you couldn't listen to the prayers and the stories that they told and not realize the context in which you were working. It really did keep you remembering that these are the people and that they are all across Ontario and this is their common heritage, you know, whether they all tune into it or not is another issue.*

As the strategy came together, a new cabinet submission was prepared to seek approval of the strategy from the Ontario government. In the early stages of that process, a lead ministry on the government side had to be identified. A ministry was proposed with whom the Aboriginal organizations had not had good experiences in the past. When it became clear that the ministry in question had to have a lead role, the Aboriginal caucus lobbied for the inclusion of another ministry to offset any negative impact. In the end, the issue was resolved by having four ministries play a co-lead role collectively: the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of Health, the Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat and the Ontario Women's Directorate.

Another problem which arose at this stage was the lack of time to develop the Strategy fully before the approvals process began. Government timeframes, both political and fiscal, came into play. As a result, the Aboriginal organizations had very little time to prepare individual budgets to accompany the Cabinet submission. Additionally, because the final report was designed from a different cultural perspective which departed from the way ministries prepare reports, some government participants found it difficult to "translate" the final report into terms that others in their respective ministries could understand. While the final report outlining the Strategy was a significant document, in hindsight it is evident to most participants that more time spent in the development phase would have facilitated or avoided problems which occurred later.

Once the final report had been ratified by the leadership of the Aboriginal organizations and had begun to go through the Ontario government approvals process, the Joint Steering Committee held a traditional feast to celebrate its collective efforts. While the story does not end here, I turn now to a review of the Aboriginal Health Policy process which was developed at the same time as the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy. The story of the merger of these two joint endeavours follows after this review.

## **B. The Development and Design of the Aboriginal Health Policy**

The Aboriginal Health Policy process differs in structure and content from the evolution of the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy. While some concepts and practices were "borrowed" from the latter, when applied to a different task and set of conditions, different meanings emerge. Thus, the Aboriginal Health Policy process constitutes its own unique story. In practice, it offers another example of what joint policy development can mean.

### **The Early Beginnings**

In reflecting back, some participants view the development of the Aboriginal Health Policy as the culmination of a long process aimed at improving the health status of Aboriginal peoples in Ontario. Where Family Healing can be seen in the context of many initiatives undertaken in the mid-1980s by both the province and Aboriginal organizations to expose and to educate about the issue of family violence, health-related policy particularly as it affects the First Nations in Ontario falls within the jurisdiction of the Medical Services Branch of Indian and Native Affairs Canada (INAC) as part of the federal government's fiduciary responsibility to



status Indians under treaty rights. As federal cutbacks in spending emerged in the mid-1980s, some First Nations organizations looked to the province to fill real gaps in the equitable provision of health services. One respondent offered the following example:

*In the early eighties to get the provincial government, specifically the Ministry of Health to recognize that they were reluctant to go on some reserves and deliver health services, took about a year and a half of documentation before they actually admitted that at [name] reserve, for instance, they weren't providing home nursing. That was a strategic moment when the Minister said, "Yes, we recognize that there are gaps, we don't know how this has happened, we don't understand the responsibility of the federal government for this?" That was a strategic moment because it opened a dialogue on something they weren't aware of before.*

After lobbying the province with little result, one organization, the Union of Ontario Indians, concluded that a separate strategy to deal with Aboriginal health needs in Ontario was required. Following a feasibility study to assess the implications of becoming involved with the province, the Union then lobbied the Ministry of Health to create an Aboriginal coordination office. In 1987 a one-person unit was set up and in 1988, the Ministry of Health commissioned a study by an Aboriginal consultant on the possible development of an Aboriginal-specific health policy to deal with the increased demand for services from Aboriginal communities in Ontario. However, it was not until a year into the mandate of the newly-elected NDP that Aboriginal concerns were taken seriously. One participant relates how Aboriginal concerns regarding health policy were dealt with up until that time:

*The differences were whenever we got involved in amendments to policy or development of new policies in the past, say with provincial government, they were always working from something that they had developed as a draft. For instance, the Health Disciplines Act had been around for a long time and suggested revisions for the Health Disciplines Act had been suggested eight years previous to the revisions to the actual act around 1990, 1992. But they didn't approach the Aboriginal organizations until three months before they were going*

*to table the thing in the legislature. Yet it had been around for eight years. In the case of building the long term care reforms in Ontario, they had worked on that for three full years before they approached the Aboriginal organizations to have input. In the case of the Midwifery Act, they did not approach the Aboriginal organizations until a couple of months before the final submission. So in all cases, we were added onto at the last minute and we had to scramble to come up with some kind of amendment that would meet the needs of Aboriginals, and at that point it was difficult to change the draft legislation in any substantive way. So in the case of the Health Disciplines Act we were able to get amendments that would give exemptions to midwives and traditional midwives and traditional healers, but that's all we got.*

*The Health Policy process was not an add on. It was something that was built from scratch and it was really from the outset an Aboriginal First Nation idea and exercise, with the government coming in after we had done some initial work to essentially check on the directions we were going. Almost a complete reversal of the process we had experienced before when government initiated policy.*

Similar to the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy, the political context was favourable to change. As one Aboriginal participant notes:

*Back in 1990 the political climate was fairly good. I mean we had at least a provincial government who had signed a Statement of Political Relationship which gave us hopes that they were going to work with us on a government to government relationship and it was a beginning. We knew that the health policy was not going to be the vehicle to do it but it was a beginning. I mean we were able to access provincial people in a way that we had never done before. So, you know, I think it had the biggest influence, political climate, within Ontario and nationally too.*

Inside the Ministry of Health, there was also an openness to more visionary definitions of health.

One government participant describes the climate at the time:

*You had an increasing drift towards understanding health in a broader sense. The sort of vision that the Ministry was going with under the early years of the NDP was a much broader one; one that's much closer to a World Health Organization definition of health as opposed to a much more narrow interpretation of where health begins, where health ends and where social services begin and end. Thinking about the issue of health determinants, the impact of housing, the impact of poverty, for example, was beginning to lend focus to things like the concept of community health centres...Even if they weren't articulated in language that*

*people inside the Ministry would instantly understand, a concept of wholistic health was beginning to take root...*

By 1991, two specific conditions had set the stage for the development of an Aboriginal-specific health policy. Structurally, the Ministry of Health upgraded the Aboriginal coordination unit into a fully-staffed Aboriginal Health Office. Politically, the development of a policy "in partnership and collaboration" was included in the Ministry's internal Goals and Strategic Directions. This internal statement was verified by the Minister of Health when she met shortly after with Aboriginal organizations in the province and expressed that commitment to them.

### **Conditions for Partnership**

In December, 1991 the first meeting was held with eight Aboriginal/First Nations organizations and the Ministry of Health, represented by the staff of the Aboriginal Health Office. The agenda focused on two questions: why was an Aboriginal Health Policy needed and what was to be achieved? Regarding the first question, an Aboriginal participant comments:

*It was bridging those gaps or the jurisdictional issues because when you're on a First Nation and you go off reserve and you utilize provincial government services. We wanted something that would address and fill in those gaps. Be it within the bigger cities, where there's language barriers like in the North, people coming down South, where we can have hostels built and health access centres. That was a big item because there's a lot of cities that have a real high population of Aboriginal people. And there weren't any services specifically for culture and that had traditional healing component built into it. We wanted to bridge in those gaps and make the best as opposed to what is out there right now.*

In terms of what was to be achieved, five key objectives emerged at that first meeting:

- to identify ways to improve Aboriginal access to, participation in and the quality of service which Aboriginal people experience;
- to identify ways to increase sensitivity to Aboriginal health issues, needs and cultural

traditions;

- to articulate the priorities of Aboriginal communities;
- to recognize and develop Aboriginal designed health services;
- to establish a strategy to address Aboriginal health needs and priorities in the context of the inherent right to self-government <sup>13</sup>

It was also agreed at that meeting, that a consultation of Aboriginal communities was necessary to accomplish the objectives. The meeting itself is described by representatives present as being very focused and task-oriented with little debate on the two central issues. On the basis of the five objectives, the organizations sought and secured formal approval from their leaderships to participate in a collaborative process with the Ministry of Health. The basis for the Ministry working in collaboration with both on and off reserve was expressed by one Aboriginal participant:

*As I understand it, the basic rationale of the Ontario government is that they service citizens of Ontario and that if the federal government has a responsibility for funding health care delivery on reserves then somebody else has to help off reserve groups. And so it was seen as the responsibility of the provincial government to meet the needs of off reserve people. But since a lot of on reserve people identified gaps in provincial health services to people on reserves, there was a rationale for both of these groups to be funded to work together.*

Some First Nations organizations had been encouraged also by their Chiefs to work with off-reserve groups. One participant expressed that mandate as follows:

*They [the Chiefs] thought that the off reserve groups have a real role to play in service delivery to band members that are not living on reserve. And some of the Chiefs had a large number of their band members living in Toronto, and they saw the friendship centres and some of the other off reserve organizations providing a real service to their band members, and they thought there should be more initiative for collaboration between on and off reserve and not this artificial separation.*

Other First Nations organizations were more reluctant. In part, this appears to be due to the jurisdictional issues involved and the potential diminishment of the federal responsibility for health care on reserve. It was also the first time most of the Aboriginal organizations involved had worked with the province on health issues:

*R1: Well, it differs because our organization works with the federal government; we have the structures of medical services branch and all those components, be it the regional director on down. We only have that one branch that we deal with... The federal government has that responsibility directly to our people in regards to health and through the treaties, the medicine chest clause of the Treaty Six, and the verbal ones from Treaty Eight and Treaty Ten. That fiduciary responsibility which is a moral obligation, is directly with our people. And with provincial government it's really, really complex. We weren't accustomed to working with the provincial government prior to ten years ago, really. And then more so when Bob Rae was elected and then we didn't have person years to do that. So our positions with the federal government were being used with the provincial government which tripled our work load...*

*R2: I think it was because the Ministry of Health was a new ministry to work with, well I felt they were a new ministry to work with the Aboriginal people directly. And the contact between provincial policy technicians and the PTO <sup>14</sup> technicians as far as health was concerned was very minimal prior to that. All of a sudden it was like we had to educate them on the way we do business, the process that we have in Ontario, and our process at the political level and how we need to consult with our people.*

Due to the concerns of some First Nations organizations, the Chiefs of Ontario Office stepped in and negotiated a parallel process for the development of the Aboriginal Health Policy: following consultations, the First Nations organizations and the off-reserve groups would each do their own report which would then be compiled into one final Aboriginal/First Nations report subject to approval of the Chiefs Planning and Priorities Committee and the All Ontario Chiefs Assembly.<sup>15</sup>

This process was accepted by all parties in March, 1992. An Aboriginal participant notes the Ministry's response:

*I think that the process itself was accepted by the Aboriginal caucus [was significant]. And even when there were various disruptions or thinking back when the Chiefs' Office requested a parallel process, it was handled admirably well by the government sector... Being comfortable to say, if that's the case, then we can still have a parallel process, and down the road we try them together. Rather than wait for that to be said under the circumstances, they were willing to roll with the punches.*

This framework was similar to the first joint process which had occurred with the Ministry of Education and Aboriginal organizations in the late 1980s. It called for a senior committee comprised of the leadership of on and off organizations and a working committee of technical staff from the organizations. It was very different from the coordinated approach occurring in the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy.

Once the conditions for partnership were agreed to, the Ministry of Health signed agreements for the financial costs of carrying out a consultation.

### **The Consultation Phase**

Several respondents commented on the significance of doing consultations. One Aboriginal person notes:

*I mean it was a beginning of many consultations that happened in Ontario at the time too, so it was the beginning when I felt that communities had the opportunity to at least voice their concerns now and we were always being surveyed to death type of thing and nothing ever happens of it. So I thought that this was the opportunity for communities to get out their concerns and hopefully make some recommendations that would lead to some positive steps for them to have better programs and services in the communities.*

Several participants were able to draw on past experience when it came to carrying out the consultation. For example, one organization had already consulted with its members in the 1980s on a health policy for their communities. Learning from prior experiences, this respondent

outlined how their consultation process worked:

*I remember in the mid-eighties the Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat wanted to define consultation from the point of view of what Aboriginal organizations expected in the way of consultation. Some basic principles that we follow in consultation were when we go out to a community we don't carry a draft paper or a draft policy or a draft program design with us, we go out and we say, "What is the basic needs that you have in the mental health area or long term care area or whatever." And we have very open ended workshops where people are able to state their opinions anonymously as to what their needs are and that's the starting point. Then we translate the needs into a sample set of objectives, translate the objectives into a sample set of strategies for implementation and then we resource that. We keep taking that back to the workshops and checking with people as we go along, but we're building on their ideas. When you drop a set of objectives or strategies on people from inside government that's what is different. And you ask them to react to somebody else's thinking and you don't build on their idea. That's usually the style of government. It's faster when you just do it yourself and drop it on other people. These processes tend to take about four years...*

*But it seemed to be a way of doing things in Aboriginal country so when it came time to build an Aboriginal health policy for Ontario there was no other way to do it. We had already done it that way, and we were doing it as a model for not only the rest of our organization, other programs like economic development and social services and housing and things like that, but also for other organizations in Ontario and for the federal government.*

Another organization drew on its prior experience working on a mental health consultation with the federal government:

*We had done community consultations, so we worked on a methodology that seemed to work well because of the geography and the language. We realized that having communities do their own research, do their own links to their own community, do focus groups as well, was a really good source of consensus and priority building.*

Because the same Aboriginal organizations were involved in both the Aboriginal Family Healing and Aboriginal Health Policy processes, and because both consultations occurred coincidentally, many organizations chose to consult their communities and members on both issues. Some also consulted on the issue of long term care. The organizations used whatever

methods and approaches worked best for their particular circumstances. The range of formats included: regional meetings; workshops with an all-Ontario format; community meetings; meetings with health-related agencies; interviews with Aboriginal inmates in correctional facilities; and traditional gatherings.<sup>16</sup>

As the organizations wrote their reports on the consultation, a recognition of the broad dimensions of the issue came to the fore. Two participants comment:

*R1: ...When we got the funds to actually go out and do a major consultation in the communities as to what should be in an Aboriginal health policy, what we learned from that was a wealth of information that we're still pulling on. So when that report was published, when I actually finished writing the consultation report for [my organization] it was quite a high for me, because I would point to this thing and say, "Read this thing, there's all kinds of really neat information in it, very unusual perspectives."*

*R2: The Aboriginal health policy in particular, we had such involvement in the actual writing and word smithing, and throwing in the pieces that we felt were a real need, framing them in relationship to other health issues or linking them into other broader issues, like lack of housing, infrastructure, community infrastructure things. We could see that we had been the writers of the policy.*

A very broad range of issues emanating from different perspectives and circumstances were articulated in the consultations. Now, the task was to turn them into a cohesive policy to address the issues.

### **Developing a Policy**

There are several substantive differences between the developments of the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy and the Aboriginal Health Policy worth noting at this point. The first concerns the differentiation between a "policy" and a "strategy". Participants who were in



involved in both initiatives offer the following comments:

*R1: I think with the health policy we were there to do health policy. Like the strategy seemed to be a whole different focus because you had the luxury of more visionary issues you could look at; policy was policy, trying to address what's immediately there and getting some results.*

*R2: Now in the end it's different because to me the policy lays statements that the ministry itself could adopt whereas in the Family Healing Strategy it's an ingredient list, right? So to me, it's a very different document, and in that sense, given that the strategy is a list of ingredients, then ours was rightly called a policy because it's more definitive.*

*But I think it's more than a word game...The two documents are very, very different, what they are and how you use them and everything else.*

There was also substantive difference concerning the nature of the issues each initiative was intended to address. For example, one participant notes that the issue of health is easier to deal with than the issue of family violence:

*Well, probably because family healing is family violence and most of all different components that we don't like to talk about as Aboriginal people. We don't like to talk about incest, we don't like to talk about being beaten up, we don't like to talk about our children being violated you know, until that healing within ourselves takes place...And all these other things crop up...Now with the health policy, you can turn that around and you can have that vision of wellness, complete health. And then go into illness and disease, just like the nursing process. You study the good systems, the healthy systems and then you go into the disease part. So I guess that's why it was much easier. There are some really good stories out there, healthy stories but in healing it was the violence part, that blanket you don't like to take off, because most people have a lot of scars, tremendous scars from their life experiences. And I can relate to it, because I'm living proof of it.*

Another significant difference relates to the type of joint process used to develop the health policy. A move away from the coordinated approach adopted in the family healing strategy to a parallel approach in health policy signalled a change in how the policy would be developed:

*The Chiefs Office was trying to coordinate the different Provincial/Territorial Organizations and the Independent First Nations in their consultation process, and they hired a consultant to roll the reports up into one but there was not agreement amongst the Provincial/Territorial Organizations as to how all those reports were rolled up, and so it took longer because to a certain extent the forums at the Chiefs Office were tied up in much more political issues, it just seemed to slow the process down. The off reserve groups were always ahead of us, we were always playing catch up to the off reserve groups because they seemed to be more coordinated in the way that they were developing their own policy statement and rolling up their consultations.*

Nonetheless, the Health Policy Working Group, comprised of the Aboriginal organizations and the Ministry of Health, began to outline various aspects of a joint report: background, issues, visions, principles, priorities, resources, recommendations. Based on the success of the Aboriginal Family Healing retreat a few months earlier, the group decided to hold a four-day retreat to develop a policy framework.

Unlike the previous retreat, it was further decided that staff from other branches of the Ministry of Health would be invited in order to inform them of the consultation findings and to solicit their input and support. However, some senior management in the Ministry of Health did not understand the nature of working collaboratively to develop policy and unilaterally cancelled the retreat. With some intensive lobbying on the part of the Aboriginal organizations and with support of the Deputy Minister the retreat did take place several weeks later. One participant defines the purpose of the retreat, distinguishing it from the Aboriginal Family Healing event:

*We set it up differently than at Elmhurst. We had the ministry, the policy analysts were there through the retreat part, and on the last morning we brought in the branch directors, the executive directors, some of those decision makers who we knew were going to have to influence or find money or all of those kinds of things. So that was something actually structurally, organizationally, a little bit different. In terms of that buy in and ownership, that was something done differently.*

In preparation for the Aboriginal Health Policy retreat, ministry officials from eight branches

attended a cultural orientation session which focused on communication styles, understanding the process of colonization, and cultural practices which would be used during the retreat. The retreat itself had a facilitator as well as an elder. One Aboriginal participant comments on the elder's role and the success of the event:

*Well, one thing I really remember on the health policy was the retreat and certainly we had a really tight circle. We ended up bringing in the elder who did a really good laying the foundation for us, reinforcing why we were there, the responsibility that we brought to that process and he did it not just for the Native people but also for the ministerial people. They felt new to that kind of process, where you had to be pretty involved with your own value system and I think that was really good. I think we worked really hard, we ended up in working groups and we stayed up late and wrote things, and we had to get consensus on what we were writing. But I think in that retreat we ended up with the help of the elder and again some key people that we were able to get other people on board.*

In working towards a draft policy, thirteen substantive issues were identified. These were formulated under three strategic directions: health status, access to services, and planning and representation. In developing the policy framework, representatives were guided by Aboriginal concepts such as the Healing Continuum and the Life Cycle which had been developed earlier during the family healing strategy process. These were now applied to an understanding of health as wholistic, thus incorporating the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs of the individual, family and community.

The group also drafted options and recommendations based on the implications for policy, legislation, administration, services and programs and resources. The draft Aboriginal Health Policy was then circulated within the Aboriginal organizations and within the Ministry of Health for further development and approvals in principle.

In September, 1993 a second retreat was held to discuss any outstanding issues. In

attendance at that retreat were the Grand Chiefs and Presidents of all the Aboriginal organizations and the Deputy Minister of Health, along with other officials from senior management. The Aboriginal leadership reiterated the importance of government to government relationships where Aboriginal distinctiveness in cultural and political terms and community autonomy is recognized. They also emphasized the importance of respecting Aboriginal concepts of health and traditional healing practices. The Ministry of Health conveyed its support for the directions outlined.

At that meeting, the Aboriginal leadership also mandated the on and off reserve organizations to work together to complete the policy. Although the Chiefs of Ontario had specified at the outset that one report articulating on and off reserve needs would be developed, the mandated meetings to do a combined report had never occurred. The process had ensued on the basis of separate on and off reserve reports. Now, the policy had to reflect their combined interests. At that retreat one participant recalls:

*...when the Grand Chiefs and the presidents of the organizations all sat there because it looked like it was going to be derailed until that point...And that's where the technicians get instructed to find a way to finish this task off because that was the deal. Let's finish the task, and then if we're going to go our separate ways, we can go our separate ways because the task wasn't finished, there was not a policy statement yet. And there was a lot of give and take on both sides. You finalize this report, you come up with what you need to, you identify First Nations specific where you need to, you identify Aboriginal where you need to and we'll get a policy out of it and move on.*

A small working group did the initial groundwork which then went to the whole policy working group for final editing. Aboriginal and government representatives described that process with its positive and difficult aspects:

*R1: I think the other strength of Health Policy is word for word what's in the final version was jointly crafted. You know, when I talk about by death by editing, I mean we must have had three meetings where word for word for word was read and changed and edited. It was an education process for some people as well. But word for word and line for line. And when some changes came back from editing, we sat down and went through all of the changes that had come from the editor that were of more significant value, that might change the meaning somewhat. So when I pick up that document, I feel really good about that document. And I think that got lost a bit in Family Healing. In Family Healing there was so much stuff, but that translation into a document didn't happen in a more collective way. So I think that's a strength of Health Policy.*

*R2: I know they met over agonizing, agonizing hours to come up with it. "Look, we're not changing the intent, we're supposed to be dealing with the wording." There were a couple of meetings where that's all we did. We didn't do anything except go through word by word of the document, saying what are we coming up with? So that was a very strange process because we didn't have to agonize like that in Healing, you know, we had writers, and the writers went away and did it. And other than to give advice, we didn't fight over this word or that word. Well, the Health Policy is literally, you can see the blood all over the report, word by word, even with the waiver that it will in no way affect federal fiduciary. So I would not describe it as a joint process from my perspective. A parallel process in terms of on and off-reserve developing Health, but I don't think a true joint process.*

As the working group finalized the Aboriginal Health Policy, they also decided to undertake a second phase of policy development. The purposes were several: to promote awareness and understanding of the policy at the community level; to solicit community priorities for implementation; to develop a process for implementation; and to develop a process for dialogue between the federal government and provincial government on Aboriginal health issues. This phase was initiated as the Aboriginal Health Policy document was being submitted to the Ministry of Health and to the Aboriginal organizations for final approvals and ratifications.

We turn now to the final part of the story: the merger of the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy and the Aboriginal Health Policy during the final political approvals processes of the

Ontario government and of the Aboriginal organizations.

### **C. From Dream to Reality**

By the end of 1993, both the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy and the Aboriginal Health Policy had entered the final approvals process of the Ontario government and of the Aboriginal organizations. In January, 1994 the Cabinet Committee on Justice recommended that the Ontario Cabinet approve both submissions subject to resolution of funding issues and to discussions with the Aboriginal organizations concerning "opportunities to coordinate and integrate programs and services that flow from the Aboriginal Health Policy and the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy".<sup>17</sup> The idea of merging the two initiatives was advanced further at a Cabinet retreat several weeks later. At the event, the government, in pre-election mode, undertook to rank which government initiatives would be pursued as corporate and which would be relegated to the internal management of lead ministries. Both the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy and the Aboriginal Health Policy were designated as corporate initiatives. To retain their status as corporate initiatives the Cabinet identified four conditions: integration of the two initiatives, the reduction of projected costs, the securing of resources, and the engagement of federal involvement [specific to the Aboriginal Health Policy].

According to politicians and senior administrators who supported both efforts, several inter-related factors were driving the move towards merging the two initiatives. The issue of fiscal constraint was of primary concern:

*Now, there were obviously some fiscal constraints on the ability to just simply say alright, the Aboriginal community should design, develop and implement, since the funding was going to be coming from our government...So we had to*

*downsize, in the last analysis, the programme, from what was originally proposed. But we didn't do that on our own, unilaterally. That meant that we had to have discussions with the representatives of the Aboriginal communities that had been involved in the development of the strategy in terms of we've got limits on what we can spend, how do we prioritize needs and programmes in order to be able to meet the needs that you've identified within the spending limits that we faced. And we ended up, of course, having to put together two programmes that originally had intended to be separate because of the funding problems and if we hadn't been able to do that, it wouldn't have been approved by the government because of the spending constraints, and in the last analysis I was central along with some of my other cabinet colleagues in bringing about a combination of the programmes in order to ensure that we got something through that was important and met the needs that had been identified rather than simply having the Treasurer throw up his hands in Cabinet and saying this is going to cost way too much, we can't afford it in the short term, it will have to be postponed until later.*

From another perspective, the government was only prepared to support one major Aboriginal initiative:

*When you're at that stage in the mandate and you're setting priorities, the weight of two separate major priorities for Aboriginal people, given the mean spiritedness that was certainly growing, and I mean it was very clear in polling what we were doing and so on, we didn't think that was politically very feasible. But we thought we could accomplish not all of the same things but most of the same things, and I still believe better, if we merged them. And there was a willingness to have a major Aboriginal priority as one of the centrepieces of where we were at that point. But to have two would have been politically extraordinarily unwise, particularly when those of us who really had been through the process were saying, the reality is there should be a continuum here. And part of my concern was, I mean I really believed that if Aboriginal Healing were part of Aboriginal Health, that the Aboriginal values around Health and Aboriginal visions of the creation of health and the prevention of illness would actually be part of that.*

Thus, integration was also viewed as desirable from the perspective of the wholistic approaches articulated in both initiatives:

*There were other considerations however, whether there might be duplication of what we were doing, how efficient the process would be and whether or not you could subdivide because the Aboriginal community was taking a wholistic approach and saying that we have to treat the whole person, we have to treat the*

*whole family, we have to treat the whole community. And so, if you're talking about wellness, and you're including in that questions of how we deal with family dysfunction, for instance, family violence, violence against women, violence against kids, sexual abuse, those kinds of things, then you can't say, well we have health over here and violence issues over here and they're not related to one another, because this is a wholistic approach. So that was also a philosophical argument as to why they should be combined as well.*

At an Aboriginal Health Policy meeting shortly after the Cabinet retreat, some of the Aboriginal organizations identified conceptually that the two initiatives should be viewed wholistically:

*The key meeting I remember was the one in Thunder Bay where we were asked to set a priority on what was most important to us, the healing or the Aboriginal health policy. And at that point we stated that we couldn't separate them, that for our people because one was an access issue and it was to fill gaps in the health system that we couldn't separate them, that in many ways it was related to the whole healing of the community. And because we were certainly thinking from a wholistic perspective that for us it was very easy to stand by our view that they were linked and they couldn't be separated. People were upset by that, but we were bound by what our communities were saying and in a way that they had been involved in how we ended up communicating with our Chiefs and our communities because we would always present the healing and the Aboriginal health policy, in their minds they were always closely linked as well, so we couldn't go back to them and say, "Well, we made a decision on your behalf that healing was more important." We had to go back to them and say, "There are two priorities here and they are not separable."*

It was at that same meeting that another Aboriginal organization first coined the phrase, "Healing and Wellness" to describe an integrated approach. It was also decided that a meeting with representatives from both processes would take place. At the subsequent "joint" meeting of the two initiatives, several Aboriginal organizations agreed to go forward with integration on the grounds that they did not want to lose either the Aboriginal Family Strategy or the Aboriginal Health Policy. Their support for a merger was conditional on Cabinet approval of both documents as distinct. Other organizations were upset that the second phase consultation on the health policy was being short-circuited by the government and requested discussion and direction



from the Planning and Priorities Committee of the Chiefs of Ontario. A number of participants at that meeting, including government representatives, felt that integration was a fait accompli:

*... We had this protracted discussion of whether this was a train with two engines, or, when you had the Healing initiative and the Health initiative and trying to bring them together, was this one train with two engines, was this one train with two cabooses, was this a train derailment. They had been really separate processes and they had been very different in that the Health Policy development had been one ministry only, whereas ours, of course, had been many ministries. I had the impression that it was pretty much a non-negotiable from the ministers' point of view after their retreat, or even before their retreat. I mean we were lucky to have it saved from getting booted off the list of corporate initiatives...and that funding was going to come together in one envelope...*

While many government participants agreed with the decision to merge the two initiatives as the only way to save both initiatives within the short timeframe available, the decision had serious implications for the Aboriginal organizations involved and for the collaborative process as a whole. It is commonly agreed among participants at the time that the decision to amalgamate constituted a breakdown in the joint process because the decision was made unilaterally by government. While the views of Aboriginal participants vary with respect to their support for integrated or separate initiatives, most experienced it as a betrayal of trust in terms of the joint process.

*I think it was the process, because let's face it, the consultation phase of both the family healing strategy and the Aboriginal health policy, they did a real lengthy consultation of all of Ontario, which was very, very beneficial and all of First Nations people participated very, very openly. And they had expected that the follow through would be similar to being respectful of the peoples' wishes and recommendations. And for the provincial government to unilaterally make that decision, "No, we'll put these together. We don't need a yes or a no. We are going to do it." They were just livid as to that outcome, not listening to what our Chiefs and grass roots people were saying. So it was like, who do we trust? The trust wasn't there. Now if they would have kept them separate there would have been a better feeling.*

Another Aboriginal participant offers the following compelling analysis of what happened to the Aboriginal caucus as a result:

*...the other thing I think is it could have been brought to the Aboriginal community, and I think that in a true sense of partnership, while there might have been several months delay, that we might in fact have designed something different than we know as the strategy...You might have seen different design components as a result of our combining it. Or you may have seen a different approach altogether which sort of guaranteed community resources and that they could dedicate those resources based on their definition of community need.*

*But the point is that because the joint process failed there, we were never given the opportunity to own it and to design, develop and deliver it. And nobody was very forthcoming in saying the province did this. And when they finally were forthcoming, it was, you know, we had already beaten each other up over things we had no control over, we were already too late and there were already some issues in terms of gaps of credibility.*

*So I think those were all sort of bad times, and I think yeah, we could have done other things and I think the first thing is that if you have a joint process, and you have to make tough decisions, then you better go to the joint process. There are some, myself being one of them, who have accepted this stuff moreso than others, but it doesn't mean that I don't feel hurt and betrayed. Even if it was an emergency, to say "Look, we're going to do this, we will accept responsibility for whatever, we're telling you we're going to do it." But you see they didn't do that. It just was done.*

*I have no recollection of them coming to me and saying we're going to have to take a combined strategy forward or we're going to get nothing. Now I heard discussions, certainly, of people saying to me, yeah, they don't have enough money, we're going to have to pick one, we're going to have to pick the other, but there were no formal consultations. And as I said, the bottom line for me, is it would have been better handled, if you want to talk about ethics in this and pragmatism, to at least outright say, we're making this decision, joint process or not, because we want to get something. But they didn't do that. If they had have said, "Look, we made this decision so don't bother beating each other up, and don't blame anybody", we could have avoided some of the things that we're still having to deal with today because of that mistrust.*

Several politicians and senior officials also reflected on the implications of the merger. In retrospect, three people offer the following views:

*R1: That was our big mistake, while we were doing our process, not having them do theirs. And I think that was a mistake. And you see our problem was, and I need to be really blunt about this, our problem was we had no mechanism for doing that because cabinet documents have to be made secretly. We couldn't get anywhere with cabinet office, explaining to them that it had to be that way. And in fairness to them, they do it with everything, for example, not negotiating with unions. It's not open to other people. Once cabinet has accepted it then you do the other thing... I think one of the things we have to be thinking about for when the opportunity comes along is how to prevent that kind of thing from happening again, because you know, we'll get there again. And it's hard to imagine. Yes, we retreated into our silo.*

*R2: Well, you know, more time being available, maybe it would have been a good thing but they were two factors that play there. Had we been in a pre-election moment six months later I don't think that government would have made a decision on this. And it was very related to a fiscal cycle too. It happened very quickly and if the Aboriginal community felt that if wasn't consulted properly, it wasn't brought along, it's a fair criticism. Because you get into the policy approval system and you know there was a window to sell this thing and it was quite clear that the only way it was going to wash was that if it was brought together and I think senior people in the government should take some responsibility for that. And it was very much the intent to save the two initiatives as opposed to I don't know what, it was very much what the intention was at the time.*

*R3: In terms of consultation, it was the most successful. The problem was that it then had to be, in a sense, subverted at the end because of the time factor. I mean it would have been best if we'd come back and said, well yes, I'm sorry we can't do that this way, we're limited in this way, so go back and consult again and come back and tell us how you can deliver a programme that is useful and important on this basis. That in itself was limiting self-government because that relationship of the government with the resources and the Native people with the needs, that unequal relationship was verified in that situation... So, I guess it was a situation of, I would hope in this context, the Healing and Wellness Strategy was a case of two steps forward and one step back.*

Ministry representatives redrafted the submissions to the Treasury Board on the basis of an integrated strategy, now known as the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy. As part of this process, government was faced with the issue of which ministry would co-lead with the

Aboriginal organizations during a planning phase and which ministry would co-lead during the actual implementation. These decisions involved the four ministries which shared responsibility for the Strategy in government: the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of Health, the Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat, and the Ontario Women's Directorate. The documents for an integrated strategy could not be resubmitted until this issue was resolved.

The co-lead issue brought to the fore ongoing tensions with some of the senior officials of these ministries regarding their willingness to accept responsibility for the Strategy and to show leadership in soliciting funding from other ministries which had been involved in developing the Strategy. A government participant relates:

*That is probably one of the most frustrating periods, realizing that there are potentially several million dollars that could be got if only the pressure is put on at the right place. And all it would have taken, I mean this is not to pretend they could have got millions and millions of dollars, but they could have got more, and it would have just required setting up ministerial level meetings, setting up deputy level meetings with some of those ministries involved. Instead we got one, maybe two letters, please give us some money, which was not sufficient. You have to sit down and convince people why it was important, why it was going to go forward. If you believed it wasn't going to go forward, it was dead in the water.*

Resolving the issue was not smooth. It was decided that the Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat would co-lead during the planning stage. An intense debate, however, ensued over which ministry would co-lead with the Aboriginal organizations on implementation:

*...The dialogue and discussion within government circles and the perception had always been, Health was going to do it because it was mostly, I mean the major portion of the money was Health, and obviously the Aboriginal communities did not like MCSS. And then MCSS decided they'd had really bad experiences trying to co-manage initiatives with Health, that they just didn't work. You know, where you had to have continually two decisions, two signatures, two this, two that, and so Health said we won't play. And at the very last minute the MCSS deputy said, "Well, then we'll lead." And it was the recognition of the fact that the document*

*was on it's way to Cabinet office, and if it didn't have a lead ministry built in, the Strategy went down the tubes, it would be game over. And the deputy went out on the plank to take on that responsibility. So that was a really strategic moment from the perspective of that Strategy because I think if she hadn't been willing to take that risk that we wouldn't have had a Strategy.*

At the same time that the Strategy was going to Cabinet, the Aboriginal Health Policy was also being debated at the All Ontario Chiefs Conference (AOCC). The Chiefs agreed to support it. They also appointed a Chiefs Negotiation Committee to begin negotiations for the implementation of the policy with the Ontario government. One technician present at that meeting states:

*...It did get passed. Again I think the Chiefs were getting pressure from other pressure points within Ontario that things needed to move. They needed dollars to flow to certain areas and provide some remedy to situations that were happening and they felt that the health policy would do that, so there were those pressure points. So I think that was a key time, the AOCC in Tyendinega where it was passed.*

On June 15, 1994 the Ontario Cabinet approved the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy with \$49.5 million to be spent over a five year period of implementation. Although the final amount was substantially lower than requested in the two separate initiatives, it was higher than many people on both sides of the table had speculated it would be. Approval of the Strategy was announced in the Ontario legislature on June 20th, on the eve of Aboriginal Solidarity Day.

A government participant recalled the event:

*One of the biggest highs in the process was the day it was approved. The day it was approved I sat in the legislature looking out at the row of women -- all of these incredibly powerful women from the organizations sat in the front row watching the MPPs. That to me was a real high point, because so many of the women, I mean it was largely women who worked on this project... But seeing everybody not in their usual get up, even I dressed up, everybody dressed up for the day, but they all sat in this one line, and it was so inspirational in terms of what was possible and that through all of the arguing, and all of the rowing that*

*was to come, at that moment there was a row of incredibly powerful women who traditionally had been excluded from decision making power period, vis á vis non-Aboriginal government, and in many cases, to be honest, vis á vis Aboriginal government. To see these women sit there as the MPPs began to discuss it, as they spoke to it, that was great, and incredible.*

*It was also quite poignant in terms of, the NDP had gone down and down in the polls. And here was a dying government that was still, despite how far and wide they had drifted on a number of issues, there was a core of some decency left to some of the people, some of the Ministers. And that was extremely poignant because it was brought about by the fact that knowing that you have this window, this small window, it was also at the same time tinged with knowing that they're going to get kicked out and some of them have really tried to do something.*

The first meeting of the new Joint Steering Committee of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy took place several weeks later. At that meeting, ministry representatives presented how the budget allocations had been reworked in light of merging the two initiatives. The First Nations Chiefs and representatives asked for time to review the information and to seek a mandate from the Chiefs' Planning and Priorities Committee to go forward with developing a co-management process for the Strategy. The search for an Aboriginal co-chair also began.

Everyone involved in these first few meetings describes them as extremely difficult. The ill feelings caused by government but not dealt with as such within the Aboriginal caucus came to the fore. The fact that money was now on the table did not seem to bring out the best in people either. The following are the kindest comments offered by participants:

*R1: I guess what I didn't like to see is people just come to meetings when there's money involved...When it comes to money, that's the hard thing to do.*

*R2: The final thought is as wonderful as this process was and as personally valuable as it was and the people that I will care about for the rest of my life, the one thing that we haven't been able to solve and I don't know if, where, when, or how it will be solved, but we haven't been able to solve working together and staying together politically and when money is on the table. You know in different arenas there's different levels of success but money always divides us and I don't*

*know how we get past that and look at greatest need. Because need is valid for everybody right across this province, there are tremendous needs for different things, but it's not even about the amount of money that's there, it's how we behave.*

During this period, the Regional Chief requested a meeting between their Planning and Priorities Committee and the co-lead ministries to negotiate a First Nations Agreement on the Strategy, separate from the off-reserve organizations. However, several First Nations organizations were not in agreement with this approach. In the end, through the mediation of several Chiefs, the Planning and Priorities Committee decided to participate in the joint implementation process. It was made clear, however, that the implementation of the Strategy was not viewed as part of the inherent right to self-government because the Strategy lay within the legislative authority of the province.

In the remaining months of 1994, framework agreements were negotiated with each of the Aboriginal organizations involved. Terms of reference to guide implementation were also developed. A set of programs to make funding available to Aboriginal communities was also designed and a project review committee was established. By year's end the implementation agreement had been sent to the Ontario Cabinet and the first call for proposals had been sent out to communities. While policy would continue to evolve through the experience of co-management, the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy was finally on its feet.

## ENDNOTES

1. Throughout this section of the chapter, the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy is often referred simply as “the Strategy”. It is to be distinguished from the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy, a term which refers to the later amalgamation of this initiative with the Aboriginal Health Policy.

2. A Response to the Ontario Native Women’s Association Report and Brief on Aboriginal Family Violence, by Ian Scott, Minister Responsible for Native Affairs and Mavis Wilson, Minister Responsible for Women’s Issues, June 1990.

3. Representatives from the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians, Grand Council Treaty #3, Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, Ontario Metis and Aboriginal Association, Ontario Native Women’s Association and the Union of Ontario Indians participated in the first meeting. The Chiefs of Ontario Office participated later, in representation of independent (non-affiliated) First Nations in Ontario. The Ministries which participated were: Attorney-General, Citizenship, Community and Social Services, Ontario Native Affairs Directorate, Ontario Women’s Directorate, and Solicitor-General and Correctional Services. Several other ministries were brought on board shortly after: Education, Health, Housing, and Northern Development and Mines.

4. Summarized by the author from the Minutes of the “Meeting to Discuss Development of an Aboriginal Family Violence Strategy”, Westbury Hotel, Toronto, July 9, 1991.

5. Op. cit., Minutes, July 9, 1991, p. 13.

6. Statement of Political Relationship, signed at Mt. McKay, Ontario on August 4, 1991.

7. Guidelines to the SPR: Questions and Answers, prepared by the Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat. August, 1992. p. 11-12.

8. The term Joint Steering Committee on Aboriginal Family Violence or simply, Joint Steering Committee used throughout this section of the chapter refers to that specific initiative only. Following consultations, the committee changed its name in 1992 to the Aboriginal Family Healing Joint Steering Committee. This Joint Steering Committee is to be distinguished from the subsequent Joint Steering Committee of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy, which formed in July, 1994 after the family healing and health initiatives were merged for the purpose of implementing the Strategy.

9. For Generations to Come: The Time is Now, A Strategy for Aboriginal Family Healing. A Final Report of the Aboriginal Family Healing Joint Steering Committee. September, 1993. p. 10.

10. Op, cit. For Generations to Come, p.10.



11. Correspondence from Chief Gordon Peters, Ontario Regional Chief to Sylvia Maracle, Aboriginal Co-Chair of the Joint Steering Committee of the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy. Dated November 3, 1992.
12. Op, cit. For Generations to Come. This issue is discussed in Section 6 of the report as “divestment to Aboriginal communities” and in Section 8, entitled Transition Through Phasing.
13. These objectives are taken from the Minutes of the first meeting, entitled Meeting with the Aboriginal Organizations on the Development of an Aboriginal Health Policy, dated December, 1991.
14. PTO refers to Aboriginal Provincial/Territorial Organizations in Ontario.
15. Summarized from New Directions: Aboriginal Health Policy for Ontario, Appendix A, p. 48-49.
16. Op. cit., New Directions, p. 48-49.
17. Cabinet Committee on Justice Report, Meeting No.: J1/94, p. 6-7. January 20, 1994.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Coming to knowledge through Aboriginal Epistemology**

#### **Introduction**

The previous chapter provides one telling of the AHWS story. It introduces AHWS to the reader and provides an overview of its development and the partnership which produced it. Given the complexity of the AHWS story, the story-line follows a simple structure based on the chronological developmental of events. As issues and dynamics emerge, they are addressed through the voices of the participants. Chapter Seven offers another telling of the same story. Its intention is to illuminate the deeper structure of the AHWS process through an analysis of key themes which emerge in the data. This chapter focuses on the transition from one telling of the AHWS story to the other. A learning process was required to move from the basic telling in Chapter Five to a more in-depth interpretation in Chapter Seven.

To illuminate the deep structure of the AHWS process, it had always been my intention to work with teachings from the Medicine Wheel. Initially, two motivations were uppermost: I wanted to maintain continuity with the teachings that had informed the Strategy itself and I recognized that the teachings themselves were particularly helpful in understanding and elucidating the underlying dynamics of process. Later on, the ethical guidelines of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples reinforced for me the importance of working with Aboriginal knowledge and the Medicine Wheel in the context of this research.

While I had used a teaching of the Medicine Wheel in the interviews and had incorporated that same teaching to guide the writing of my first analysis of the data for the community report, I was aware at the time that I had only skirted the edges and had not fully

entered into learning from the Medicine Wheel. In the transition from the first to the second telling of the AHWS story, I now had that opportunity. In retrospect, my journey to the Medicine Wheel was the process that had been awaiting me since first experiencing the power of that knowledge as a participant during the development of AHWS; a seminal moment of encounter that I described in the introduction to this dissertation.

This chapter chronicles the learning that ensued for me as I sought to understand the deep structure of the AHWS process by means of a wholistic way of thinking in general and the Medicine Wheel in particular. As a story within a story, it helps the reader to understand how I arrived at the analysis presented in the next chapter. As discussed in Chapter One, wholism is central to Aboriginal epistemology and provides a logic that is different from many Western analytical approaches. As a non-Aboriginal thinker working in an Aboriginal context, it afforded me a fresh perspective from which to view my partial, limited ways of interpreting the data. Wholism as a different logic opened up a new way of learning for me that proved to be very challenging, insightful and exciting.

As will become evident in this chapter and in the next, themes and dynamics in my own coming to knowledge through Aboriginal epistemology resonate with themes and dynamics that are present in the data. The learning I experienced helped me to make connections and discover patterns in the data not readily apparent. Similarly, events in the data often brought clarity to my own personal confusion, which in turn helped to uncover deeper issues both within myself and within the data. Although I did not fully understand what I was experiencing as I was living it, I was aware that these dynamics were happening and decided to keep a journal. Because my own learning process is so intricately connected to the analysis I will present in the next chapter, it is

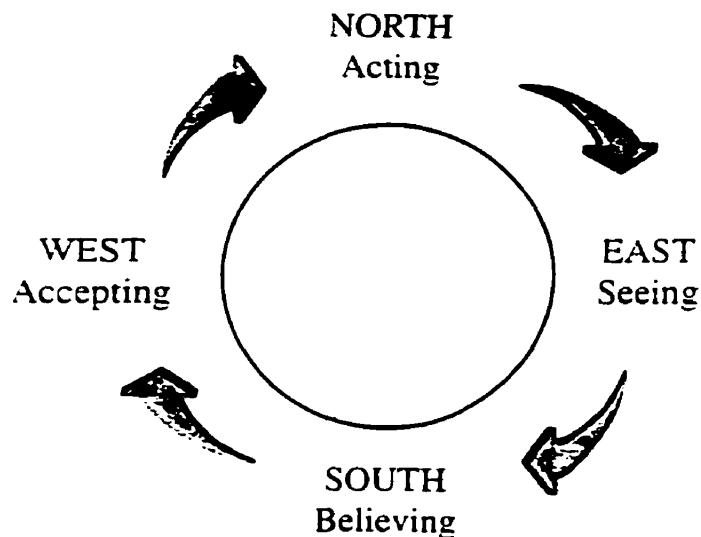
important to share some highlights from that journey of discovery before re-telling the AHWS story. In doing so, Aboriginal people have affirmed for me the importance of speaking in a more balanced way; thus, at times I speak from a place of the emotions, body and spirit as well as intellect.

As a way of configuring my part in this story, I have adopted a teaching of the Medicine Wheel that was shared with me by a participant during one of the interviews. We were discussing the differences in meaning among the terms responsibility, commitment, and ownership. In that context, the participant offered the following:

It's a bit more than just commitment. It really says I see it, I believe it, I accept it and I do it -- it's a wheel. And so for me that's ownership. So I see it, I see it to be the truth, I believe it to be the truth, I accept that's what it is, and so I do it, I live it. And the wheel is a wheel that talks about acceptance -- oddly enough! And so I guess I tend to see ownership as that.

The teaching is depicted below:

### ABORIGINAL TEACHING I



Working from this teaching, I have organized my reflection along the four themes of seeing, believing, accepting, and doing. I have come to view this teaching as the inner, personal dimension of self that is closely related in my mind to another teaching I was given for the purpose of thinking through the second analysis: vision, knowledge, motivation, and action. This chapter works explicitly with the first teaching while second teaching provides the framework for Chapter Seven.

As so often has happened during this process of living with and writing this dissertation, the "right" book, thought, or person has come just when I needed it. As I was preparing to write this chapter I was deeply conscious of my lack of language to describe the inner journey I have been on. Not surprisingly, Moustakas' works on heuristic processes came to my attention at that point. Moustakas (1995) offers not only a language to describe what is essentially experiential learning, he also affirms the validity of learning in this way. He explains

Heuristic meanings came into my life when I was searching for a word that would meaningfully encompass the processes that I believed to be essential in investigations of human experience. At the time I was engaged in studies of loneliness. The root meaning of *heuristic* comes from the Greek word *heuriskein*, meaning to discover or to find. It refers to a process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis. The researcher is present as a person throughout the process and, through internal search and self-dialogue, comes to understand the phenomenon with increasing depth. Heuristic processes in themselves open possibilities for new directions in one's life (Moustakas 1990). (1995: 23-24).

In attempting to articulate my experience of coming to knowledge through an encounter with Aboriginal epistemology, Moustakas' insights on heuristic processes will accompany me. With striking congruence to that of Moustakas, Gregory Cajete, a Tewa educator, writes on Indigenous learning processes. His work also deeply informs my experience and this reflection.

## **Seeing**

At the outset of this journey, there were two insights about learning from wholism in an Aboriginal way that have stayed with me and continue to grow more meaningful over time. The first gave me courage and the second gave me freedom.

Simply stated, the first insight that prepared me for the inner search is the belief that if something is whole, all of it is already there. It is a matter of each of us discovering and understanding the inherent wholeness that is already present. It is in the process of the discovering that understanding unfolds and meaning is created. This belief gave me courage because it told me that I was not responsible for creating the actual wholeness - that is the Creator's role. Rather my task was a less daunting, more humble one of discovering or "seeing" from my perception the wholeness that was already there in the data.

This insight had given me courage before I began the interviews because I could trust that with enough shared experience from the participants, the wholeness of the story or at least as much of it that I could understand would in fact be present. It gave me courage again during the second analysis when in moments of doubt and anxiety I could not see or understand the inner logic. In my view, this belief resonates with a little discussed dimension of knowing in Western science:

Every interpretation of nature, whether scientific, non-scientific or anti-scientific, is based on some intuitive conception of the general nature of things...But in spite of much beautiful work...we still have no clear conception of how discovery comes about. The main difficulty has been pointed out by Plato in the *Meno*. He says that to search for the solution of a problem is an absurdity. For either you know what you are looking for, and then you are not looking for anything and cannot expect to find anything...A potential discovery may be thought to attract the mind which will reveal it - inflaming the scientist with creative desire and imparting to him (sic) intimations that guide him (sic) from clue to clue and from

surmise to surmise. The testing hand, the straining eye, the ransacked brain, may all be thought to be labouring under the common spell of a potential discovery striving to emerge into actuality. (Polanyi (1964), cited in Moustakas 1981: 209).

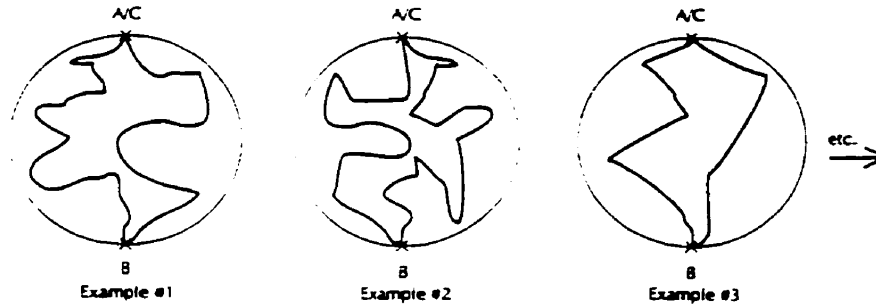
Whether identified as belief, spell, tacit knowledge, imagination or some other term, a very strong sense is implied here that there is far more operating in the process of discovery than simply me consciously applying my mind to an issue. Discovery comes from a different place than analysis yet analysis is utterly necessary to the process. The testing hand, the ransacked brain is part of the process but as I have come to understand it, a mode different than active analytical striving was required for connections to be made and insights to emerge. Reflection is my current term for naming that other mode. Seeing the wholeness that inheres requires active engagement in a reflective process.

The second insight about Aboriginal knowledge gave me the freedom I needed to do my own exploring. It is captured in a statement by Monture (1995) cited in Chapter One about the nature of learning and one's responsibility; she states that "truth is internal to the self." These words have been with me throughout the journey. From an Aboriginal perspective they call attention to the purpose of the journey as an inner search unique to the learner. Cajete (1994) observes that

A concept of each person's work, akin to the Hindu notion of "karma," is honored in the processes of Indigenous education. Indigenous teachers see that each student is unique and has a path of learning that they need to travel during their life. Learning the nature of that path is many times the focus of Indigenous rites of initiation and vision questing...(p.226).

Once again, as reiterated from Chapter One, the image that complements this understanding and from which I draw meaning in relation to my own learning process is taken from Dockstator's (1993) work:

Figure 20: Many paths through space



As a kind of touchstone, this insight stands in tension with those theories of knowledge which focus on transmitting received knowledge. Such approaches emphasize "truth as external to the self". Although deeply contested now, this was the predominant model of learning in the Ontario educational system when I was growing up and the mode by which, in my view, the system itself is still organized. As I understand it, the affirmation that there are many paths to a destination and the freedom to find one's own path and to take as many turns in the road as necessary is the beginning point for learning in Aboriginal perspectives. In addressing the importance of learning in this way, Cajete (1994) states that in Indigenous contexts, "the emphasis was on allowing for the uniqueness of individual learning styles and encouraging the development of self-reliance and self-determination" (p. 222). This perspective finds resonance with those educators, particularly adult educators, who advocate for self-directed learning. As part of a research process and strongly congruent with Dockstator's depiction, Moustakas (1995) describes the nature of this process as the inner searching within a labyrinth:

The heuristic investigation may be viewed as a labyrinth containing myriad pathways that challenge, distress, confuse, fascinate and puzzle the researcher. In such searches, we often seek renewal in meanings that transcend restrictive thoughts and that move us forward in our thirst for new knowledge (p. 24).

In addition to providing me with spiritual and emotional support, these two insights



concerning the nature of truth in relation to wholism also help to illuminate the difficulties I encountered in the first phase of trying to develop an analysis of the data based on the Medicine Wheel.

### **A Necessary Confusion**

In anticipation of working with the Medicine Wheel I had been "collecting" different versions of the wheel from different Aboriginal cultural traditions for several months. Once I started looking, they started to appear. Each application of the Wheel I came across made internal sense in relation to the topic someone or a group was exploring, learning from and using in their practice. However, none of them used the teaching that had guided the development of the Strategy. When I looked at them as a group to see how I could work with them, I discovered that each related the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of reality to different cardinal directions. I remember in particular my profound disappointment when I came across an entire book based on one woman's deep understanding of the teachings of the wheel as it was given to her, only to discover that in her tradition the spiritual lay in the east, not the north, and so on. I knew enough at that point to know that such a difference makes all the difference in terms of interpretation and understanding. I brought my confusion to a meeting of my thesis committee.

At that meeting, a committee member steeped in Aboriginal knowledge clarified several things for me. First, it was important for my analysis to use the teaching of the Wheel that we had used to develop the Strategy. "It was used for a reason. This wheel is indigenous to Ontario." She offered to find a version of it for me. Secondly, through the questions I was asking, such as

where do "values" belong or where do "relationships" fit, she saw that I had picked up bits and pieces from many different teachings of the Wheel. She explained that the Medicine Wheel was in fact very multi-dimensional, that each dimension carried other teachings or wheels within it. This was very insightful for me. I had not realized until that moment that the "bits" I had heard were actually parts of other teachings - I had some bits without the whole and hence, a lot of confusion. She stated that it normally took a long time for someone to be able to carry that many teachings and gently cautioned me that more confusion would abound if I tried to carry too many. She suggested two teachings in particular that would be helpful for analyzing the data.

After the meeting, I followed up with the committee member who had offered to find me the wheel indigenous to Ontario. I asked but it didn't arrive. In effect, I was still dealing with knowledge as something very external to myself. Several months later in reflection I wrote:

"I recognize now that I was treating knowledge as an object to be found, as an answer to a question. I kept hoping the framework would arrive without me working for it. I was not prepared to do my own learning - yet."

A second moment from that same meeting helped to surface the fears that were preventing me from engaging in my own learning in relation to the Medicine Wheel. Awhile after that meeting I wrote:

"As the discussion proceeded and things clarified, I began to feel upset inside. I became concerned about how I could interpret Aboriginal categories of meaning as a non-Aboriginal person. I voiced that concern and felt myself being protective and defensive, putting caveats in the way. "I used the word "struggle" a lot in that meeting, which another committee member picked up on: "I'm not just talking about your struggle, that's part of the process but part of it also are your implicit values, where you come from. It's important you're clear about "who you are" and that you be explicit about your values, where you're coming from because we all bring our values". At the time, statements like that scared me because I felt I would have to expose myself through my analysis and writing in a personal way that I was not comfortable with."

There are two fears here and both relate to the self in relation to knowing. Eventually I came face to face with both. One concerned the issue of subjectivity and the academy. Upon reflection, I wrote later on that

"I wanted a clear line separating myself from my knowing and the analysis I would present. I have always felt that there is something very untrustworthy about exposing the subjective to Western critique - I feel it in my bones - the lack of respect accorded people as human beings in academia. I have observed friends and colleagues who are honest and self-disclosing in their work and pay an extremely high price as a result. Respect is always a bottom-line issue for me."

Confronting the second fear ultimately helped me to resolve the first. The second relates to the ambiguity of my position as a non-Aboriginal learner that I felt rattling around inside me but had not named yet. This time, yet another committee member helped me to understand it. In the context of talking about biculturalism and my "struggle" in working with another people's knowledge, she said that we fear entering another's world because of assimilation; we fear having our own identity annihilated. In psychoanalytic terms, it is the fear of another inhabiting us or being inside our bodies. Upon reflection I wrote:

"The term "assimilation" is particularly meaningful in this context. The feeling of being inhabited by another brings a visceral image of my very body being invaded, which I instantly want to reject. Until that moment I didn't understand the lived experience of assimilation that so many Aboriginal people have gone through. I had understood and fought against assimilation politically but I had not understood it in such an intimate way. The threat of being assimilated, of being radically changed, had prevented me from entering another's way of knowing despite my own desire to do so. I had known and written at some point in the summer that I would have to lose my mind in some sense to do this work and that prospect terrified me. I now knew that much more than my mind would be challenged. My body, my emotions and my very spirit are already deeply involved..."

As I struggled with this issue on an emotional level, my mind was also being opened. For example, one night watching television I caught an interview with Deborah Tannen about her

new book *The Argument Culture* (1998). In it she discusses a key dynamic in Western thought, namely the format of debate and argument and the limits to knowledge and knowing produced by this framework. In addition, she discusses formats from other cultures, particularly Eastern thought which function on different premises i.e. harmony and balance, and which result in more integrative ways of knowing. I knew this book was a gift. It seemed to get to the root of the conflict I was experiencing concerning Aboriginal and Western forms of knowledge as two different and opposed ways of knowing. She suggests go with "one" or "many" as a way of not working in a binary, dichotomous and reductionistic way. The Medicine Wheel honours this principle by working with the one *and* the many - one learner, four dimensions, which continue to multiply. Other articles and written pieces which brought similar messages kept appearing.

### **Becoming prepared**

I dwell on this initial phase because I now understand its necessity. In relation to the task of developing an analysis, I found that intellectually I could not make connections between the Medicine Wheel and the data. I believe now it is because I was not ready on the mental, emotional and spiritual levels to do so. Although I had finally cleared the time in a physical sense to do the analysis, it was not time yet. Through these and other seemingly unrelated events during this period, I came to see that although I was unable to work because I was not ready, there was an inner preparation occurring:

"I've heard it said often particularly in Aboriginal circles that "things don't happen without a reason". It takes time to understand. When I think of the initial confusion, I now think of the trickster, a figure in many Aboriginal traditions who I don't understand but feel was present during this time, helping me find wheels but not allowing me to use wheels as "answers". I think of being given a teaching

of the wheel and then it not materializing...It was a matter of coming to terms with myself first and trusting who I am... In having to acknowledge my lack of readiness, I came to see that I could only be where I was. I also came to know on a conscious level that at some point I would be ready."

"Preparedness" "being ready" "right timing" are themes that are present in Aboriginal ways of knowing and present in the data. For example, an Aboriginal elder relates that he has a 100% success rate because he only works with people who are ready. Government participants recognize that taking four years up front to *develop* the strategy is infinitely more effective for implementation later on. The right timing of issues such as healing family violence is not just about good political strategy, it is about people becoming ready to act from the inside out.

In relation to "readiness", the writings of a close friend who is an indigenous Hawaiian strike home. She relates the words of a Hawaiian *kapuna* (elder) who has since passed on:

He described the process whereby the *kapuna*, when asked "How and when will I know?", responds "You will know someday when you are ready." This implies not only mental maturity in order to understand, but also time to learn "through experience" or through various little or seemingly unconnected experiences, that, over time, add to and build upon total experience and through that - knowledge. This, I think, also teaches one patience and humbleness (*ha'aha'a*) or not being a "know-it-all"...while keeping one attuned to his/her experiences (correspondence of Wayne Keona Davis to Leilani Holmes, 1995, cited in Holmes, n.d., endnote 1, p. 115).

## **Ready**

It came simply, and with deep joy. I knew I was ready to develop a framework and work with the data. I felt an inner strength and a kind of certainty and energy - and that was enough. I could begin now.

"One morning a few weeks ago, I woke up and was able to see a connection between the themes we had talked about in the interviews and the Medicine Wheel teaching. I actually lost the paper I drew it on but that didn't seem to matter - it wasn't the content that was important, it was the experience of finally

connecting that was meaningful."

Writing from his own experience, Moustakas (1981) states that:

The initial journey was an attempt to discover the one true way to proceed; it involved a process of self-inquiry, which was not planned but simply happened, which was not carefully sampled but occurred spontaneously at unexpected times and places (p. 208).

A summer of confusion and not seeing was necessary to disrupt any notion in me that there was "one true way to proceed". For me, there was no straight line between being given a teaching and being able to apply it directly to the data. I had to cycle through the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual blocks in order to be prepared to know. My whole being was deeply implicated in my knowing and until I accepted this, I was not ready to learn. In coming to this acceptance, my resistance dissolved and I began to trust the process implied in the notion that "truth is internal to the self".

### **Believing**

In terms of the Medicine Wheel, believing sits in the south. In other teachings, knowledge and mental activity or thought also sit in that same direction. In this next phase, there is deep correspondence and meaning for me in the concurrence that belief, knowledge and thinking all sit in the same place. While I do not know if drawing such relationships among teachings is an accepted way to proceed in Aboriginal terms, it is part of the truth I discovered for myself and how I understand my experience of developing a framework and doing the second analysis.

### **Letting go**

Drawing on the initial connections I had felt, I began to develop a framework by trying to

relate the interview themes directly to the teachings of the Medicine Wheel I was going to work with. This quickly became a tangled incomprehensible web of too many categories or themes. In recognizing the sheer complexity of it, I realized that something was wrong and knew that things had to be simplified. I was still trying to work dialectically between Aboriginal and Western ways of knowing, relating the both to each other and it was going nowhere.

I am not sure what came first after that, but at some point out of sheer frustration I let go of the interview themes which were framed in Western terms (e.g. difference, strategic moments, culture, and working relationships). And I began to focus on just the four Medicine Wheel dimensions (vision, knowledge, reason (motivation) and action). And, of course, it was then I remembered that I had been instructed to work with the Aboriginal teachings and not both Western and Aboriginal frameworks. In that moment of recognition, I remembered a phrase of Metis elder Joe Couture when he stresses the importance of "dialogue" as distinct from "dialectical thinking" in relation to Aboriginal thought (1997: 8). I also understood then the meaning of encountering Tannen's book and her suggestion to work with the one and the many. It now seemed to come as the response to my question of how to work with not only two opposed ways of viewing things but two different frameworks or ways that knowledge is structured. The issue seemed to dissolve at that point. It was craziness to try to work dialectically with both my original categories and the dimensions of the Medicine Wheel. I understand now that I had to let go of my original categories in order to focus on the Medicine Wheel. I had to choose the "one" which in this case, also contained the many. I could not continue to operate dialectically. I finally had to enter into dialogue with Aboriginal knowledge. As I pondered what that might mean, things opened up for me again.

Several years ago on the wall above my computer I had tacked a prayer that the receptionist at the AHWS office had pinned up on her wall. It is called the Prayer of the Directions and is written by an Anishnawbe woman, Rosella Kinoshameg (Appendix 6). Taking it off the wall I began reading it. I had read the prayer often before but now I felt like I was reading it for the first time. Each direction opened up to me through her understanding. Her words speaking of each direction became "themes" for that direction. For example:

**EAST:**

**We give thanks for the gifts of vision, guidance and leadership.**

**May we be like the eagle: to fly high and see far**

**As we watch and guard the well-being of the Anishinabe.**

**May we see situations clearly and always lend a helping hand.**

**May we listen and be a true leader: provide service.**

**(Rosella Kinoshameg, no date)**

As I let these thoughts sink in, I began to hear the words of various participants and connections started to flood in. Under the dimension of "vision", I created a file with the themes of guidance, leadership, see situations clearly, helping hand, service. I searched the data for these themes and they started to fill in. Then I added context relevant themes from the data such as "elders" who provided guidance and help in particular ways, etc. Working this way, the analytical framework began to evolve.

### **Learning how to learn**

As I proceeded to fill out themes for the four dimensions of the Medicine Wheel using



insights from Rosella's prayer, there were a number of moments when I got stuck and paralysis set in. I began to notice that the flow of the process stopped whenever I tried to make the themes fit mechanistically rather than let them find their place in relation to the rest of the data and the four directions. I discovered that although I was directing the process, I could not control it or impose upon it; whenever I did, the flow stopped. In effect I was learning how to learn in a different mode than I was used to.

In one such poignant moment when I was utterly frustrated, the image came to me of a child eating a bowl of alphabet soup, poking the spoon around in the soup trying to make words out of letters, without being able to read. The next day I wrote:

"I feel like a child again trying to understand a new language in the full sense of that term. Understanding and not understanding. Being able to say some words and not others. Sometimes the letters make words that I recognize, other times it's all a jumble of letters and words that don't seem to make any sense. "

This particular experience occurred as I was dealing with a significant piece of data about teaching and learning. It helped me to discern a sub-text in that theme about the Aboriginal and government caucuses "understanding and not understanding" each other. My own experience of "not understanding" helped me to hear what both groups were saying from their different perspectives. As a non-Aboriginal person I did not understand things from an Aboriginal subject position yet at the same time I was discovering that I could learn from a different frame of knowledge.

One of the fears of being an outsider in a new culture is that of making a "mistake"; the fear of doing so almost ensures that one will. In relation to Aboriginal knowledge, I was learning that I had to be fearless. Positive and strong messages kept coming back to me: it is a whole, it

will make sense, trust the process. The belief that "truth is internal to the self" helped me to understand that the categories, themes, or even the directions were not inviolable in themselves; they were there as guides. Rather it was the understanding or meaning that evolved when the themes in the data and the four directions connected that would constitute my interpretation or analysis. Believing and trusting in the wholeness and goodness of the Medicine Wheel as an expression of wholism I learned that eventually, everything does "fit" or makes sense although not necessarily in self-evident ways or in ways that are easy to articulate.

This process of developing an analytical framework will be familiar to qualitative researchers. The central dynamic in doing qualitative analysis is that of "moving back and forth" between data and analytical themes or categories using ourselves to help mediate, make connections, and discover patterns. What was new and different for me in this experience, however, was that the Medicine Wheel provided far more than a conceptual framework. In Aboriginal thought, the four directions metaphorically form the boundaries of sacred space and are intended to lead to higher thought (Cajete 1994: 92). "Learning how to learn" in an Aboriginal way challenged the very ways that I had learned to think. At one point I wrote: "It feels like everything I know is unravelling, being "unlearned", a kind of emptying out. I also want to say "cleansed"." I was learning my way into a new way of thinking which necessitated learning my way into a new way of being in relation to thought. In the experience of developing the analysis I was moved into a very different space where belief is intrinsic to knowledge and knowledge is ultimately self-knowledge. I learned that it was only from "that sacred space" that I could engage in "knowing" at all.

In attempting to name that space I became aware that I had to be fully present and attentive to what was before me in a way that is different than when my analytical mind was engaged. Within myself, I had to make a conscious shift from an analytical mode to a reflective mode. From an Indigenous learning perspective Cajete (1994) comments on this shift:

Overt intellectualization is kept to a minimum in favor of direct experience and learning by doing...Indigenous teachers recognize that work invites concentration and facilitates a quietness of the mind. This leads to illuminating insights about what is being taught (p. 224, 225).

In relation to my experience, not only was more of my self involved, I found that I had to be present to the material in a different way; it required that I become more receptive and less assertive, engaging in a deep listening process. In this respect, I was not simply reading transcripts. It often happened that I would "hear" the voices and recall phrases of various participants, including how they emphasized certain things during the interview experience and then I would search out their words in the written text. Because I knew all of the participants, their visual image was also present to me. Again, I find resonance here with the wholism of learning from Aboriginal perspectives. Cajete (1994) observes that

...the cultivation of the human capacities - listening, observing, experiencing with all one's senses, developing intuitive understanding, and respecting time-tested traditions of learning - naturally formed the basis for skills used in every process of Indigenous teaching and learning (p. 222).

In relation to the reflective mode, Cajete talks about the importance of knowing how to pay attention as an essential ingredient:

The cultivation of humility prepares a foundation for the students to learn the nature of attention. Attention may be considered a foundation of Indigenous learning in that almost every context - from learning basic hunting and fishing skills, to memorizing the details of ritual, to listening to story, to mastering a traditional art form - relied on its practiced application. Attention in the

**Indigenous sense, has to do with the focus of all the senses. Seeing, listening, feeling, smelling, hearing, and intuiting are developed and applied in the Indigenous perspective of attention (p. 226).**

**From a slightly different yet complementary perspective from within the Western tradition, Moustakas (1995) also provides insight into the nature and process of this way of coming to knowledge which resonates with my own experience. In his discussion of the authentic discovery of knowledge, Moustakas reflects on the very nature of thinking:**

**In thinking authentically we are called by what is in us, by what we are most strongly attracted to, by what needs to be thought...Thought recalls what it is connected to, what it must be concentrated in; what it must dwell on, in memory; what is and what can be...The process of discovering meaning in thought is in the nature of thought. Genuine thinking alters our ideas, understandings, assumptions and judgments (p. 62-63).**

**The language of "dwelling" "memory" "attraction" portrays knowledge as a living subject where there is a very active relationship between the knower and the object of knowledge. He sheds more light on the inner experience of the discovery process:**

**In reflecting on my experience, I am aware of the value of beginning with my own perceptions, feelings, and intuitions of the way things are for me, internally and externally. I permit myself to let these subjective and objective meanings to remain in my awareness, to wait in silence for the distinctive relationships to emerge, connections that mark my being, and offer something compelling and vital for understanding and action. This process cannot be hurried; it requires its own space and time...(p. 44).**

**Moustakas calls this a meditative way of thinking and contrasts it with the more conventional mode of calculative thinking:**

**Calculative thinking is representational of what is typical of objects and things. It is lineal, goal directed, a moving toward, "for" something, and "in order to." Meditative thinking is non-lineal. It is a response to what is, an awareness of horizons, thinking that is both open and bounded to what is given. Meditative thinking opens up a new ground of meaning, a releasement toward things, an openness to mystery that leads to new understanding of Being, to creation of what**

is, to what is given. It enables the fulfilment of a crucial dimension of nature. The poetic is a kind of thinking that calculated thought fails to reach (Heidegger 1977, p. 343). (p. 63-64)

In developing the data framework I was straddling the two modes of thinking. The nature of the Medicine Wheel as circular, dynamic, multi-dimensional and moving defied calculative thinking. I could not "fit" things together in any pro-active, linear manner; rather I had to sit with the data until the themes emerged and the relationships found their place. Calculative thinking stopped the flow whereas meditative thinking facilitated connections. I learned that I had to be in a particular state of "being" rather than a state of "doing" to engage in the work:

"I continue learning how to learn, which, in part at least, involves my deep process of "unlearning". I continue to have faith in this process, I trust it. I know some sense of the "wholeness" will come through even as I work on a tiny part. I am consoled by Bohm's insight about even the tiniest cell contains the whole. Yet the tension between doing and being remains. I experience intimately my own impatience to keep "doing" even when I know I don't understand, when I should stop and switch to "being" mode, be with the data, be with the feelings, sit with the framework. The more I "do" in this way, the more frustration, the more imposition, the more I intervene unsuccessfully. Doing comes at the end of a cycle of reflection in Aboriginal learning, after vision-knowledge-motivation. I always want to "do" this analysis. I want the "answers" before I have learned *how* to arrive there. The cart before the horse."

Letting myself be taught meant allowing the Medicine Wheel to reveal itself to me in a way that I could comprehend. Moustakas observes:

What is present in Being lets something appear and show opening; opening something means to make light, to illuminate. "The phenomenon itself, the opening, sets up the task of learning from it while questioning it, that is of letting it say something to us. The opening gathers and protects everything. Something can radiate only if openness has already been granted" (Heidegger 1972, p. 285). (p. 65)

As a phenomenon, the Medicine Wheel itself set up the dynamic by which I could learn from and with it. "Coming to knowledge and knowledge coming to me" are the words I use currently to

express my understanding of that dynamic. The more I experienced knowing in this way, the more I came to believe in it as a way of coming to knowledge, the more I experienced its essential openness and was able to participate in it.

## **Accepting**

In many respects I could characterize my entire experience of working with the Medicine Wheel as one of coming to acceptance of a way of knowing that is different from ways that are more familiar to me. However, when viewed as part of a whole, acceptance remains one among other fundamental dimensions of a process that is both more comprehensive and more open-ended. In this context, there are three distinct yet related moments that stand out in my experience. Again, for me there is relevance in relating those insights to other teachings of the Medicine Wheel; in particular the dimension of reason (understood as motivation) and the emotional dimension to knowing which also sit in the Western direction along with acceptance.

### **Being Bent out of Shape - the experience of understanding**

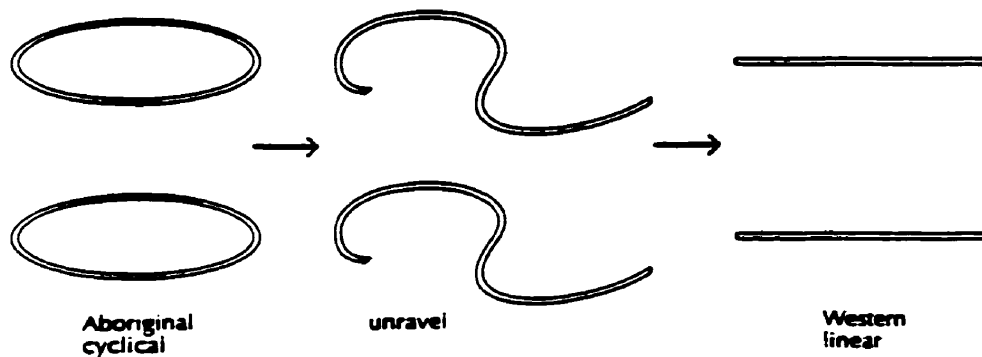
Midway through developing the analysis, an insight about my experience of working with the Medicine Wheel became a turning point in terms of accepting the truth of this very different way of constructing an analysis. In reflecting on what happened I wrote the following:

“My inner movement in this analysis: I keep turning corners as more data comes into view and then falls into place through the four dimensions of the Medicine Wheel teaching. Each time this happens it feels like a corner has been turned. At first, I distrusted the ease with which the data seemed to fall into place, then I realized once again that I just had to trust the process. With the awareness that I had turned one corner, I realized that I have been constantly turning corners. In the feeling of constantly turning corners comes the insight that I am slowly learning to

walk in a circle. I see now that a circle is an infinity of corners.”

In coming to this realization, the words of several government respondents about their experiences of moving out of their "boxes" during the AHWS process presented themselves. In a similar way, as I turned more corners, my box was becoming a circle. Once again several of Dockstator's images came back to me. In depicting the difference and distance between Western and Aboriginal rationalities, Dockstator (1993: 20) uses a line and circle respectively. For one to become the other it must be bent out of shape:

**Figure 11: Translating the Aboriginal to the Western perspective**



This insight helped me to understand the "unravelling" that I was experiencing on a cognitive level. It was also a deeply affirming moment that contained the felt sense of knowledge coming to me in order to help me understand both the AHWS experience and my own learning in relation to it. Receiving the insight felt like a signpost one comes across while walking on an unmarked trail; it engendered a sense of "rightness" about the path I was on and a deeper trust and acceptance that I would find my way. In retrospect, it only marked the beginning of moving to acceptance on deeper levels. More was yet to come.

The forces of assimilation had been trying to turn Aboriginal circles into lines and boxes for a long time and were still not "getting it" as Aboriginal respondents kept pointing out in the data. The reverse process seemed to be going on with my analysis; lines felt like they were becoming circles. However, as related in the introduction to this dissertation, being bent out of shape meant having to turn yet another different and unexpected corner that brought my personal history into the circle. The discovery of my ancestors' participation in the early colonization of Aboriginal peoples in Canada brought tremendous feelings of shame and guilt that touched me at my core. It also led me to a deeper level of understanding in relation to similar themes in the data. Passages referring to emotions such as fear, guilt, ambivalence, anger, and betrayal attracted my attention in relation to my own feelings and eventually helped me to see the unresolved pain that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants carried in relation to their different yet related subject positions and how those dynamics affected the joint process. In the re-telling of the AHWS story in the next chapter, I refer to this dimension of the AHWS experience as "the subjectivity of colonialism".

While very disturbing emotionally, in relation to doing the data analysis from a Medicine Wheel perspective, this unexpected knowledge ultimately had the positive effect of pulling me inside the data further and grounding me in relation to it from within my own experience. It meant that I could not distance myself from the colonizer's role as it is replayed in government relations with Aboriginal people. Nor could I seek respite from the negative impacts that continue to affect Aboriginal people today. In a way that became very real to me, I experienced this as "good medicine" in service of my own healing and the broader healing that I believe is required among us today. In a powerfully moving way, Moustakas (1995) puts into words what



this process was about for me:

In considering the discovery process, I have observed three phases: first, an *initial breakthrough*, the *revelment* of something new, an *opening receptiveness* that inspires me to look again in a fresh way. Next, I become aware of *recovering* something lost, bringing into consciousness something that has been dominant, missing or is unfinished. This involves a return to prior experience, a bearing with something that previously seemed unbearable, suffering with it, struggling with it, allowing myself to perceive it openly and accept its existence. It is as if, at last, there is a recognition, a calling from life itself that gives birth to something previously unspoken or abandoned, and denied, but that is now allowed to be. The recovering phase enables me to live with the rejection, to face the fear, to listen to voices of the past, my own and others, with new and different ears, until what has been hurt or tampered with rises once more, as an expression of my own being. In the process, I recover something of myself and am in touch with resources that enable me to view the situation differently and to see my own possibilities for moving beyond the fear, pain and apparent hopelessness (p. 45-46).

As I moved more deeply into the data, a related issue involving acceptance came to the fore. The perspectives and themes of the participants from the Aboriginal caucus seemed to gather easily around the large thematic categories that I was applying from the Medicine Wheel. However, participants from the government caucus appeared not only to speak in a different voice they also raised a number of other issues which did not fit the framework as it had been evolving. This was a very disconcerting moment for me. As a non-Aboriginal person, I had focused much attention on and felt I was beginning to understand Aboriginal voices in the context of an Aboriginal conceptual framework that was beginning to make sense to me. At that point, it was jarring to encounter issues that seemed to have little relevance in that framework.

The recurrence of several of these issues in the talk of government participants indicated their meaningfulness and obvious relevance from that caucus' perspective. As a former participant, I also understood their issues from somewhat of an insider's perspective. I wanted to respect their concerns and I had always operated on the principle that it was from the views of the

whole group that the wholeness of the analysis itself would emerge. However, at that point, I could no longer continue working. I felt that I was being yanked from one caucus to the other, from one world to the other, and I could not bridge the difference. My own perspective had shifted and changed from working with the Aboriginal texts and what have should have been the world I was more familiar with, now felt very distant.

After a period of consciously not thinking about it and letting things sift and settle, one day I was able to calmly return to the data framework and simply add in all the pieces that did not "fit". What happened in that space "in between" deserves further comment.

Through reading and writing papers over several years in the doctoral program, I had consciously sought to understand the very gap I was once again experiencing between the two worlds. In encountering it again, what was different this time is that I chose *not* to think about it. I think many people understand today that creative processes require time apart and the kinds of spaces where the active mind is suspended. Moustakas (1995) depicts this as an incubation phase. In my case, I had reached a saturation point in relation to the ongoing experience of liminality that stopped me from working altogether. In discussing the inner dynamics of what happens at that point in such a process, Moustakas (1995) aptly describes my own experience:

When my life has been completely saturated with my search to discover the nature and meaning of an issue or problem, I find myself growing weary and feeling exhausted. I have stretched my energies and resources to the limit. I need a period of rest. This period initiates the next phase of heuristic discovery - the *incubation* phase. I am no longer directly preoccupied by my own question or problem. A seed has been firmly planted. It undergoes silent nourishment and care, which allows for inward creative resources to emerge, take hold, and burst through to a deepening and extending of my understanding. On a conscious level, I am engrossed in entirely different matters but within me is a growing awareness or knowing and involvement, an active inner life that increasingly contributes to my understanding (p. 28-29).

I now believe that during my resting period the inner dynamic working on me was the experience of my own subjectivity in relation to colonization. This inner processing helped me to come to a deeper conscious appreciation and acceptance of the government representatives' concerns which led to a fundamental shift that ultimately enabled me to complete the data framework.

When I returned to work, I began to incorporate the issues of the government representatives that hadn't "fit" before; I did so by relating them to the broadest categories or overarching themes. In this way, a set of sub-themes was created which addressed their concerns in their own voices. This had the effect of radically shifting the data framework as a whole. I retained the previous themes that had felt very inter-related in terms of the Aboriginal voices; however, they now became a set of sub-themes in addition to the new sub-themes, under a major category. As things came into balance, I felt that acceptance again of the sense of mystery at work in this process. The broader perspective I gained from this rebalancing felt like the whole had finally arrived. With everyone's substantive comments incorporated, the "whole" now consisted of a framework of 125 pages.

## **Acting**

In the context of this reflection, "acting" meant shifting from a phase of analyzing the data to writing a chapter based on the analysis. As a recurring theme in this reflection, repeated experiences of "not being able to" helped me to face obstacles of my own making and to clear the path. Cajete (1994) reflects that

Indigenous teaching facilitates learning how to see how one really is, rather than

an image manufactured through one's or other's egos. This real perception of self helps the student realize that they are essentially responsible for the barriers to their own learning (p. 223-4).

In the experience of "not" being able to accomplish something, crucial openings are provided from which I learn a great deal about myself. In this phase of the process, I highlight my learning from and about the Medicine Wheel as a process of discovery in the act of not being able to write.

In the Medicine Wheel, action sits in the North with the spiritual dimension of being. The ongoing tension that I experienced between being and doing re-emerges in a prominent way and in this last phase of my experience provides an essential connection between spirituality and action.

### **Not being able to write**

Doing the analysis of the data had taken me nine months. Once I had completed it, the plan at that point was to write one chapter containing four sections based on each of the dimensions of the teaching I was working with: vision, knowledge, motivation, action. The data that I had gathered under "vision" constituted a particularly large section, with each of the others diminishing in size. I was aware of the unbalance but hoped it would sort itself through in the process of writing. As I began to write the "vision" section, many threads appeared but I could not find the right thread to unravel and weave the diverse yet related themes contained there.

I tried five times to write the section and then finally after a lot of frustration, I remembered a friend's definition of insanity: doing over and over again the same thing that doesn't work. I had to stop myself from trying to write and sort out what the problem was. When

I looked at the data as a whole or even sections of it, it felt like a blur. I couldn't see the trees for the forest; all I saw was a massive forest. To gain clarity, I thought I needed to get into my "rational" mind.

### **Thinking analytically about the data**

In seeking a way to deal with the "blur", I turned to a basic text on qualitative research (Strauss and Corbin 1990). I felt I had to get back into a very analytical mode of thinking in order to distinguish the themes better. The first words I read were consoling:

After some time (probably months) of collecting and analyzing data, you are now confronted with the task of integrating your categories to form a grounded theory! We have ended that sentence with an exclamation mark to vividly express the perplexity experienced by many researchers upon arriving at this point in their studies. Integrating one's materials is a task that even seasoned researchers find difficult (Strauss and Corbin 1990: 116).

Citing Atkinson, Strauss and Corbin talk about why this stage of the process is so challenging:

This aspect - making it all come together - is one of the most difficult things of all, isn't it? Quite apart from actually achieving it, it is hard to inject the right mix of (a) faith that it can and will be achieved; (b) recognition that it has to be worked at, and isn't based on romantic inspiration; (c) that it isn't like a solution to a puzzle or a math problem, but has to be created, (d) that you can't always pack everything into one version, and that any one project could yield several different ways of bringing it together (p. 117).

Reading on, I realized that I had missed a step. I had assumed that because the data was "all together", that it had come together in ways that I could see and understand and then simply write out. The "blur" of it told me that I needed to be able to differentiate more within the data, to understand its terrain. Browsing through Strauss and Corbin gave me some clues: look for the range of kinds of things under each category and sort out its properties. For example, within all

the material under "vision" look for pieces which suggested causal conditions, the phenomenon itself, context, intervening conditions, action/interaction strategies, and consequences (p. 98).

### **Moving back into the reflective**

I applied their strategy and it seemed to work. In sorting out properties I could better understand how themes inter-related. I felt reassured but quite bored. There was something too mechanistic and tedious about the process when I had just finished months of onerously sorting and interpreting the data in terms of its dimensions and themes. At this point I spoke to a member of my thesis committee and she suggested an alternative process.

In talking with her about the dimension of "vision" I had mentioned the eagle, who in Rosella's prayer "flies high, and sees far". The eagle, with 360 degree vision, is able to view the whole terrain. She suggested that I be like the eagle, and survey the landscape, not too close but not too distant, finding the right height from which to focus on various areas of the data. She advised that in focusing on a specific dimension or part of the forest, I should try to see its essence, then rest, and not write. Go back and look again, rest and not write and continue to repeat this process until basically I felt ready to write.

Again, I was relearning the lesson about not acting before I was ready and learning that readiness had a lot to do with being in the right spirit and right frame of mind to do the work. Cajete (1994) provides insight into the step I was missing from an Aboriginal learning perspective. Reflecting on the intersection between knowing and acting, he writes:

Knowledge and action are considered parts of the same whole. Properly contexted and developed knowledge leads to balance in terms of action. Therefore, to assure the integrity and rightness of an action, a great amount of time is spent reflecting

and seeking information and understanding before forming an opinion or taking an action. Prayer, deep reflection, patience, and "waiting for second thought" are regularly practiced in Indigenous decision-making (p. 226).

Part of my impatience had to do with time. In the data as well as in my own experience, there is a tension between time and timing. As a creature of my culture, *tempus fugit*; time always feels like a scarce commodity. In the Aboriginal world, time is abundant; things take as long as they take. "Waiting for second thought" is usually the wisest course because it leads to much more effective action in the long run. I and a number of the non-Aboriginal participants recognized this truth in the AHWS experience. Yet on a personal level it is always difficult for me to practice. In the context of developing this analysis, time was a sub-text running underneath the tension between the analytical and reflective modes of thinking I was continuously crossing.

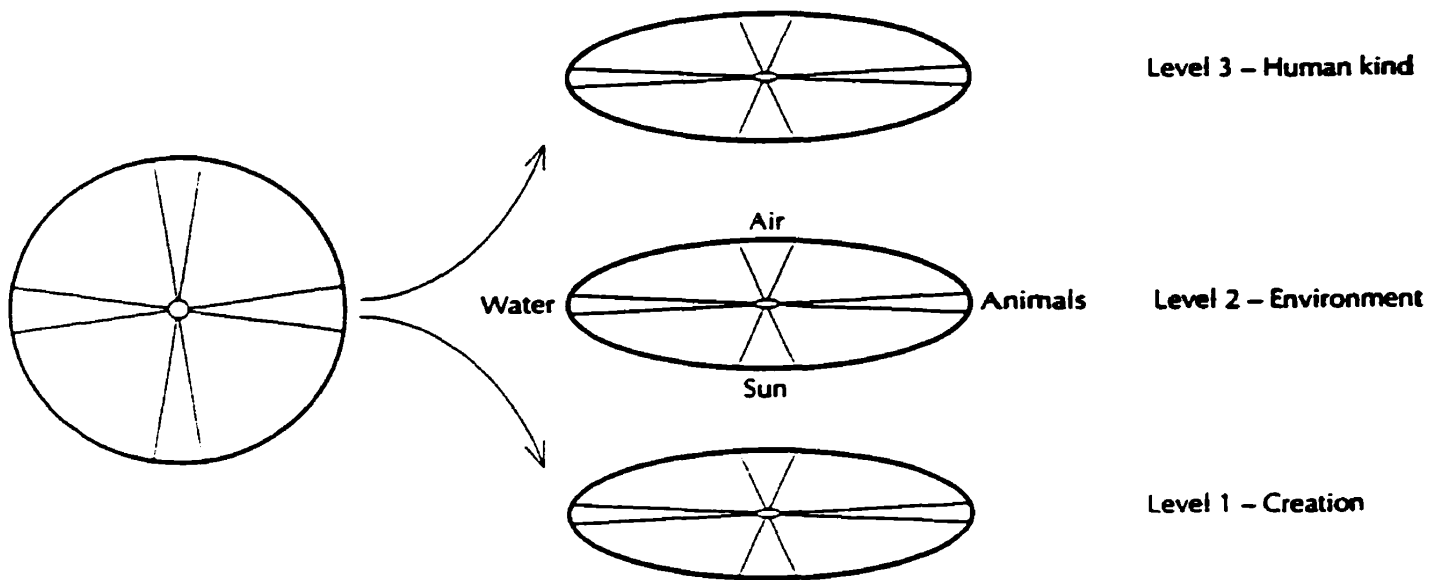
Nonetheless, after that meeting I felt deeply relieved. The possibility of working non-analytically and of "resting" attracted me because I felt mentally exhausted. In directing me away from my mentally active analytical space in the south, the committee member was, in effect, encouraging me to move towards the other end of the continuum in the north, the reflective mode which I experience as a kind of spiritual space. There I could relax and work from the visual and the intuitive which is always a place that energizes me and often brings insight.

### **Medicine Wheels appear**

The next day I began to visualize the landscape of the data and draw images of it. I could tell when I was too far and too close to the data. Much like a camera, I was able to locate the proper distance to see an area of the data in focus. Then I took a break. And at that point something wonderful happened. I saw the medicine wheels as cycles and the data as strands

woven into circles. I saw four strands woven into circles that I could quickly identify in their broad terms in relation to the data. Dockstator's words concerning Aboriginal epistemology as multi-layered consciousness and especially his image of three-dimensional disks with each dimension distinct yet related, came to mind (1993: 40):

**Figure 23: Medicine wheel as 3 levels of understanding**



More images continued to come and I drew the four incipient cycles as part of a spiral beginning and ending with unattached threads, symbolizing the present moment in history, while leaving open the "coming from" and "going towards".

Focusing on each cycle, I was able to map the essence of vision, knowledge, motivation, and action for that cycle with relative ease. As each cycle came into view, I was able to name its central theme and to give it a title. I began to see how the cycles themselves were connected. This, in turn, led me to pay attention to the transitions within each cycle and not just the essence



of the content for a particular dimension. For example, after mapping the essence of vision and the essence of knowledge as cycles, I would then ask myself what was the inner movement *between* vision and knowledge in that particular instance.

This worked well for the first three turns around the Medicine Wheel but less so for the fourth round. The major theme and content for that cycle was clear enough. It focused on the seminal moment of merging the family healing and health policy initiatives into one strategy. The problem was that the data did not fit into the cycle of vision, knowledge, motivation, and action. In my understanding of the data, the decision to merge did not come primarily from a place of vision and I felt like I was lying when I tried to make it fit there. I had long learned by now to pay attention when things didn't fit and especially when they felt forced. If something felt forced, it likely didn't fit in reality!

In a moment of rest, just looking at that circle, it suddenly came to me. "This thread doesn't start with "vision", it starts with "action", a very painful action, the unilateral decision by the government to not support both initiatives as presented." Motivations begged to be revealed. With that insight, I realized that the flow of the dynamics was going counter-clockwise and not following the usual clock-wise movement. That seemed to fit the reality or essence of the content. One of the participants had talked in graphic detail how the whole process seemed to "unravel" from that point on. As an unmistakable sub-text, I could still hear the sadness in that person's voice, describing those events. This affirmed that I was on the right track and that I wasn't simply imagining something that wasn't there. I let this thread re-work itself moving backwards from action to motivation to knowledge until the place of vision was reached.

This dynamic helped me to understand the content in a very different manner from before.

While I didn't like the asymmetry it presented in relation to the other circles, I knew intuitively it was true. It made sense. This was a place where the joint process broke down and the government process took over in a way that typically excluded Aboriginal participation. The reversion to "business as usual" in terms of the government's action differed from any of the previous three cycles. This anomaly eventually shifted my understanding of the joint process. Contained within the case study as a whole I now saw that I had an example of a joint process that worked and an example of a joint process that had broken down. In terms of creating knowledge, this provided much more fertile ground for understanding than analyzing either only a process that worked or only a process that did not work. Both were essential for understanding and both were indeed present.

With that last insight in view, I was finally able to put pen to paper and to write. The outcome is the second interpretation of the AHWS story as related in Chapter Seven. The other less tangible but equally important outcome relates to the personal learning which enabled me to arrive at this point. I realize now that without the inner journey to "truth as internal to the self", the rest of the journey would have been impossible. Cajete (1994) captures the essence of my experience in relation to that understanding:

In summary, a primary orientation of Indigenous education is that each person is their own teacher and that learning is connected to each individual's life process. Meaning is looked for in everything...Individuals are enabled to reach completeness by learning how to trust their natural instincts, to listen, to look, to create, to reflect and see things deeply, to understand and apply their intuitive intelligence, and to recognize and honor the teacher of spirit within themselves and the natural world. This is the educational legacy of Indigenous people (p.227).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### A Journey Around the Medicine Wheel

#### Introduction

Chapter Five provided one telling of the AHWS story. Through the voices of the participants readers became familiar with how the family healing and health initiatives began, the conditions which facilitated partnership, the phases of development which resulted in a strategy and a policy respectively, and lastly, how both initiatives were then merged into one overall strategy. In Chapter Six I related my own journey of moving from this type of analysis to another form of analysis based on the Medicine Wheel, which is paradigmatic of Aboriginal epistemology. Having laid the foundations in these two chapters, we are now in a better position to examine the dynamics of joint policy development in a more in-depth manner. To do so in this chapter, I employ a particular teaching of the Medicine Wheel which is depicted on the following page. This teaching provides a broad conceptual framework for analyzing the content of the AHWS process.

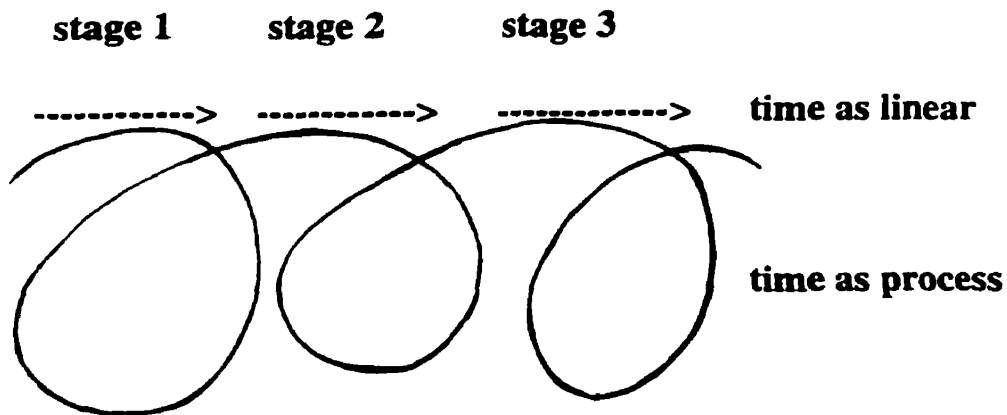
Because elements are always related to each other in Aboriginal epistemology, the Medicine Wheel provides a dynamic way of thinking about the AHWS policy practice that moves beyond categories and chronology as fixed or static. In drawing attention to the movement and direction of change, categories as dimensions of experience flow into one another creating an intelligible whole through iteration. Thus, from a Western perspective, applying the teaching of the Medicine Wheel as a method of analysis is particularly useful for uncovering dynamics, discovering patterns and making connections, which is the *modus operandi* shared by all qualitative approaches to data analysis. From an Aboriginal perspective, understanding the inner

movement, seeing patterns and making connections is quintessentially what Aboriginal epistemology is all about. As related in Chapter One, a Western thinker may never look beneath the turtle to understand what the turtle is standing on while the Aboriginal person is interested in little else. A similar analogy, recounted in Ross (1996), concerns waves: in the Aboriginal context, the shapes that waves assume are less important than the energy patterns which cause those shapes to change. Thus, as a more in-depth analysis, this chapter can be construed as an enlargement of the first telling based on a different form of analysis or it can be viewed on its own terms as a second telling or interpretation of the AHWS story.

This chapter is organized in four turns around the teaching of the Medicine Wheel. Each turn will be depicted in a diagram before the explanation is given for that round. Conceptually, these four cycles are linked to each other forming a spiral that represents the multiple layers present in the complexity of lived experience. In theory, the number of cycles that could be developed is infinite. As learning proceeds in an open-ended process of discovery, new cycles are created as understanding emerges. Thus, a continuous and self-directed learning process is generated which, as I understand it, is the intention of Aboriginal epistemology. In this regard, the four cycles portrayed here represent an incipient analysis by a learner who is beginning to understand.

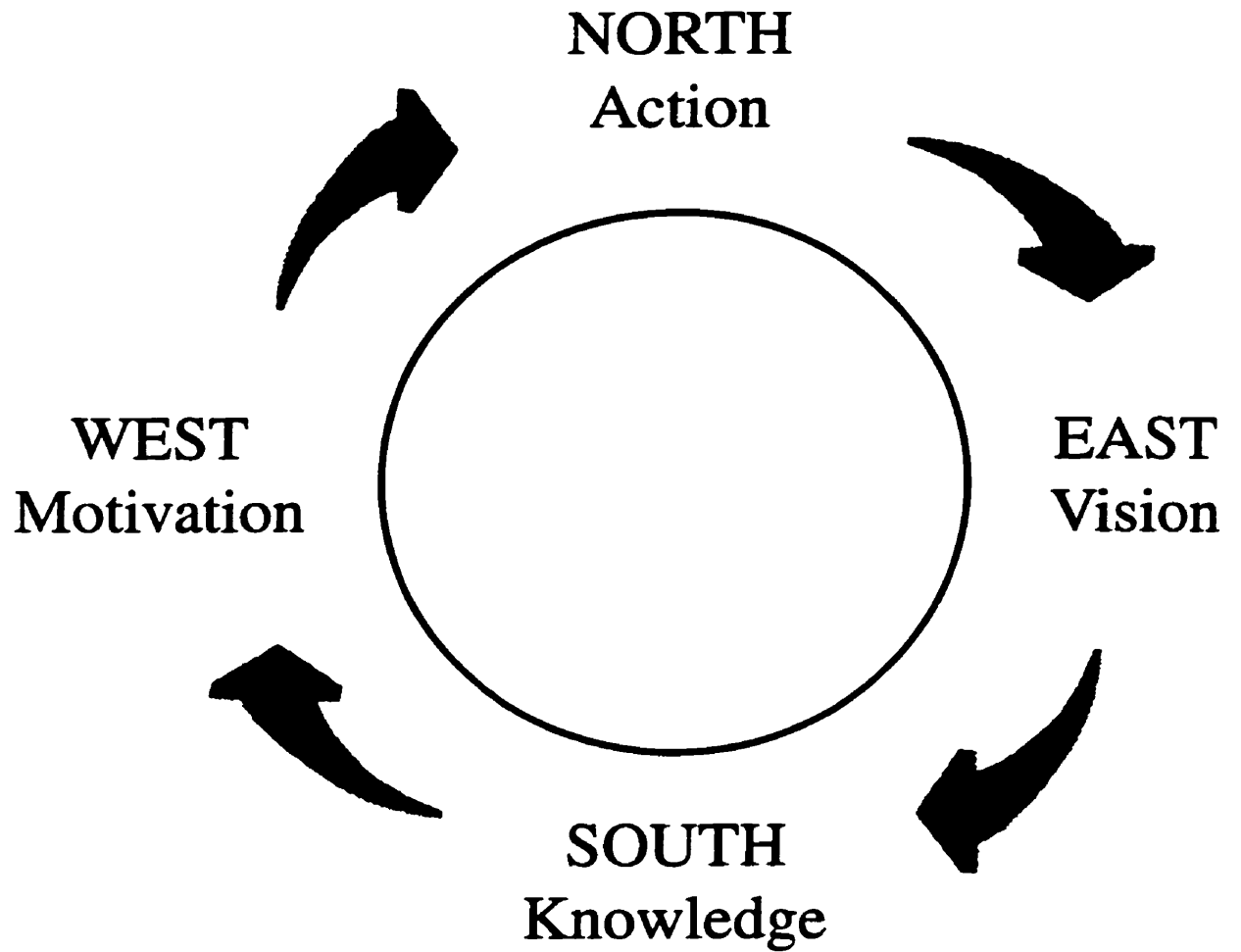
In striving to understand the inner movement and to convey my understanding of the dynamics operating, I have tried to name the essence of what each cycle is about with a title, using verbs rather than nouns to capture the dynamic quality of what is being portrayed. For each of the four dimensions within each cycle I have also identified a "moment". While "moment" refers to events in actual time, it is also intended to direct the reader to the dynamics occurring

within events. In this sense, "moment" does not try to capture the facts surrounding events but rather seeks to convey the essence and meaning of events through key dynamics. To distinguish it from chronological time, I have come to think about this dynamic as "process time". In the following diagram, I depict the relationship between the two kinds of time present in "moment":



In process time, themes introduced at one point can and do reverberate in other moments, taking on more nuanced, fuller or different meanings in other locations and/or at other points in linear time. To my understanding, this is what is meant by an iterative process and in my experience, it can lead to more integrative or wholistic ways of thinking. The end result is that rather than creating a singular and definitive interpretation, like oral knowledge itself, interpretation is left open to other understandings.

# ABORIGINAL TEACHING II



**FIRST GO AROUND THE CIRCLE**  
**“the politics of moving into relationship”**

**ACTION**

**“Agreeing to act”**

agreement to work in partnership

consultation as a first test of partnership

new political space to act



**MOTIVATION**

**“Willingness to Work Together”**

mutual commitment to the issues

political willingness

the challenges of inclusivity

**VISION**

**“Conceiving a new approach”**

government initiates a new approach -  
joint policy development

partnership based on political  
recognition

wholistic and inclusive

willingness to share power



**KNOWLEDGE**

**“Determining “whose knowledge””**

an Aboriginal-led, “Aboriginal focus”

government-led policy-making  
reversed

learning by doing



## **FIRST GO AROUND THE CIRCLE**

### **"the politics of moving into relationship"**

The first cycle focuses on the dynamics of the formation of the joint partnership. While the terms and conditions under which the partnership was formed are addressed in Chapter Five, in this round of analysis, we look at significant political dynamics, both informal and formal, that led to the establishment of certain principles by which the joint process would proceed. This working out of "groundrules" constitutes the beginning of the story in chronological time. In "process time", this round is concerned with the unfolding of a new approach to policy development and the power/knowledge dynamics and motivations for adopting this new approach. As a new approach, joint policy development facilitates action in the form of an agreement to work together which in turn creates new political space to act.

## **VISION**

### **Moment: Conceiving a new approach**

#### **Joint policy development through partnership**

The idea to respond to ONWA's "Breaking Free" report on family violence by means of a "joint policy development process" in partnership came from a small inter-ministerial sub-committee under the Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD) of the Ontario government. As government respondents stated repeatedly during interviews this approach represented a significant departure from "business as usual". In policy-making terms, the "usual" approaches



include any of the following options: based on the report, the government bureaucracy internally designs a new program, with or without consultation, which is offered back to the community; alternatively, government responds by putting more money into existing programs; or lastly, government accepts the report but chooses not to act on it. Common to these options in the conventional approach is the idea that policy-making remains the purview of government.

Adopting a joint policy development approach signals a "new" approach to Aboriginal issues in the province and by implication a recognition that the "usual" approaches have not worked. The new approach means "working together" with the Aboriginal community in an open and shared policy-making process. This approach goes beyond consultation and the studying of issues to the joint development of solutions together. As a senior bureaucrat remarks

*I think joint policy-making is very different from consultation... I think policy making is when you actually sit and you put your goals and your resources on the table and say, "Okay, how do we together come to some conclusion about how to meet these goals with these resources?" Consultation is where you come out with a blue print that's not quite approved and say, "Well, how do you like it?" And people say, " Well, we like it or we hate it" and go back and modify it. That's better than nothing but it's not open policy-making. If we are to take seriously First Nation government and I think that we should, then you really do have to think about it more in terms of government to government, you have to think about it in terms of what resources and responsibilities. I don't think we've done any great favour by detaching resources from responsibilities...I mean it would be inconceivable to me that you couldn't do better with those resources managed closer to the populations they're meant to serve.*

As a new approach, joint policy development marks a departure from a conception of policy-making as an internal technocratic process to one that is more broadly focused on social planning as community-based social development (Walker 1983). Thus, joint policy development represents a contribution on the part of the government to the vision that informed the development of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy.

In the following excerpts, a senior administrator of a major ministry offers some reflections on the ineffectiveness of conventional approaches and why joint policy development, particularly in the Aboriginal context, is the "right" approach:

*I: I am just wondering what your reflections are on joint policy development, given some of your experience.*

*R: Well, I think it's the right way to go and I think there was far too little of it. I mean this was an exception. There was a real tendency to think the policy process should be closed and inwardly focused and I don't agree with that. I worked for over a decade in (identifies another province) on and off with Aboriginal issues and what worked best was getting the relevant parties around the table and trying to work through something that worked for the people it was supposed to serve and also worked for the government who had jumped through various hoops. I saw historically very little success on programs that were planned in isolation from the people it would affect. You have to get out and experience and work with people.*

Contrasting the two approaches, the same respondent critiques the conventional approach in the following example from an Ontario experience:

*The Ministry of (identifies ministry) had spent quite a lot of money building what they termed an elder residence in the community and they were quite upset that it had never been occupied, that the community had refused to move into it. And I went up there and spent a day sitting with the Chief and with his band council and the First Nation council, really sort of probing and what came out was that they wanted an arena not a senior citizens housing project. Secondly, the elder residence had been dubbed in their language as a place to go to die and the elders had no interest in dying and weren't that keen in moving so it sat empty. It was vandalized and just stood as a monument to how stupid it is to plan things without the community. And to not listen to them and presume, you know, go up there and see with our eyes, "Wow, there's a whole bunch of old people and the housing looks a little crowded so I guess we should build senior citizens housing" rather than listening to people who say, "Well look, our values are about our children, we don't necessarily feel like we're crowded but our priority would be to have an arena and a hockey team and so on." They eventually got their arena and they eventually bulldozed this several million dollar building. But to me it just represented everything that was wrong with the presumption that this was all about population ratios and if you have so many people then you should build an X or a Y.*

*So I guess I was trying to do a couple of things. One was just going and saying to the ministry, "You have to go." They had a difficult time accepting the idea that the deputy minister would go and sort of spend the day sitting on the front lawn of a Chief's house on a First Nation, this wasn't what deputy ministers were supposed to do in the ministry. And I was trying to, I guess just by example, say to them, "You're never going to understand these issues sitting at your desk in Toronto, you really have to get out there and sit down with people and work it through." But you know it's a system that knows a lot about being Queens Park centered.*

As part of the AHWS vision, joint policy development indicates a change in the direction of provincial Aboriginal policy. A sub-theme dealing with Ontario-Aboriginal relations provides some contextual background for understanding the emergence of joint policy development.

### **Ontario-Aboriginal relations**

Historically and constitutionally, Aboriginal issues in Canada fall under federal jurisdiction. For this reason there has been limited provincial involvement in Aboriginal issues until recently. Incremental provincial involvement from the 1960s on has been shaped by developments on the national scene. In the Ontario context, Cameron and Wherrett (1995) characterize the 1970s as "a period of growing, if ambiguous, involvement of the province" in Aboriginal affairs (p. 18). On the one hand, the province was willing to support Aboriginal programs and the treatment of Aboriginal peoples as a special needs group. On the other hand, when it came to land and resource development issues, the provincial-Aboriginal relations were openly antagonistic. However, with the end of the Tory reign in Ontario and the election of the Liberals in 1985, a more open and cooperative era began.

Following the entrenchment of Aboriginal rights in the Constitution in 1982 and subsequent Ministers conferences focusing on Aboriginal self-governance, the province

committed itself to a more pro-active agenda oriented towards self-determination and increased provision of services. This trend in policy development continued and was enhanced by the NDP from 1990-1995. However, while more Aboriginal issues were becoming part of the provincial political agenda, policy development remained at an incipient stage. Prior to the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy, there was only one other limited precedent for engaging in a partnership to develop policy jointly with Aboriginal organizations; as noted in Chapter Five, a post-secondary education strategy was developed jointly in the late 1980s.

### **Willingness to Share Power**

One important implication of adopting a joint approach to policy development is the willingness of the Ontario government to share power with the Aboriginal leadership. This intent is reinforced by Ontario's recognition of the inherent right to self-government in 1990 through its Statement of Political Relationship. In recognizing Aboriginal difference in this manner, the government advocates a new way of behaving with respect to Aboriginal peoples: bureaucrats are directed to act "as if" they are working with equal partners, "as if" in a government to government relationship.

In an interview with an elected official intimately involved in formulating the government's policy towards Aboriginal people, the willingness to reverse historical dominance and to share power is evident:

*Our government was the first government in Canada to officially recognize the inherent right to self-government for Aboriginal people. So that meant that in developing policy to respond to the needs of the Native community there had to be an attempt to ensure that Aboriginal communities designed and developed and implemented the programmes in consultation with government as partners rather*

*than simply having a government perhaps go out and consult with groups of Natives and then design a programme and deliver it, which may or may not actually meet the needs of the community.*

The government's vision of Aboriginal policy at the time meant challenging the ethnocentricism inherent in what this official called the "Goldilocks approach to policy development": the conventional approach where bureaucrats determine the options and ministers are presented with three typical kinds of choices, "one's too hot, one's too cold, and one's just right".

*This was unique in the sense that we didn't do that. We said to the Aboriginal community, you know, we brought them together and we said, alright, you do it, in conjunction with us, but basically it was led by them, they did it. And then you come back and tell us what the needs are and what the programmes are that you think should be implemented to meet those needs and give us some idea of the estimates of the costs that would be involved. So that whole approach of just giving it to them and not letting them but asking them to do it was in recognition of our commitment to Aboriginal self-government and the need for Aboriginal people if they are going to have healing, to have dignity and self-respect and to not be having somebody tell them what to do or to do things for them because in my view, I mean, European society has been telling Aboriginal people what to do ever since the first Europeans arrived on the Eastern shore of North America, once they got over the first winter thanks to the Aboriginals. And in some cases that has been helpful, but in most it hasn't. In most cases Aboriginal people have suffered because European people thought they knew better.*

Joint policy development as an expression of the willingness to share power facilitates the Aboriginal vision of co-existence discussed in Chapter One. That vision is founded on the twin dynamics "of self-rule and shared power". Respecting "self-rule" is the only basis on which "shared power" can emerge. Thus, both elements of the equation are essential for a new and just form of co-existence.

However, without a clear and definitive entrenchment of Aboriginal self-government at the national level, the Aboriginal vision of co-existence is constrained. The most that can be

achieved at the provincial level is to act "as if" self-rule exists. Thus, "sharing power" through joint policy development in the AHWS case proceeds de facto under conditions of ongoing unequal power relations. As one cabinet minister characterized it:

*I guess it's true in most parts of the world where you have indigenous peoples who have been dispossessed and subsequently colonial governments, and subsequent governments who have all the resources. There's a basic unequal relationship which can make it very difficult for people to actually come to deal with each other as equals in terms of equal respect and shared concerns.*

One successful strategy for dealing with the tension contained within "as if" was to distinguish policy development from ongoing political dialogue on self-government among leaders at the provincial level. Several senior bureaucrats commented on the wisdom of this move. As one administrator noted:

*I think that the other really strategic issue was engaging the Aboriginal First Nation organizations at an analytical level which isn't always easy to do because you tend to get very rapidly to the political level, that there was a willingness to kind of work through some issues at an official to official level rather than political leader to political leader level and I think that worked pretty well. You know it never works perfectly but I have seen a lot of Aboriginal government/white government processes go off the rails because you're trying to figure out tiny little kind of bureaucratic issues with very senior people around the table or conversely, you're trying to work up big philosophical issues with very technocratic people around the table so I think there was an appreciation of how to do some of that sorting.*

In addition to the willingness to share power, several other implications to adopting a joint approach to policy development emerge as sub-themes.

### **Wholism and inclusivity**

Two important principles which guide the government's thinking about establishing the partnership are that it should be wholistic and inclusive. In the case of the family violence

initiative, effective solutions meant that issues should be dealt with in their complexity which necessitates a multi-ministerial involvement. Eventually, ten ministries become involved in this initiative. While this "wholistic" approach was not entirely new within government, with the one exception noted above, it had not occurred with respect to Aboriginal social policy issues. Secondly, it was felt that partnership would only be effective if all the stakeholders involved were part of it. Therefore, "inclusivity" meant extending invitations to all the major Aboriginal organizations in the province who had an interest in the issue.

### **Government's preparation**

The partnership idea involved an evolutionary process. Some members inside the OWD Aboriginal sub-committee were determined to create change, "to cause something to happen":

*We're always in the back. It's the communities that do the projects, they do the work, it's their development, it's their process, it's a community process. I think what we brought to this was a community development approach which we used very explicitly and with a strong understanding of what we were doing. On the inter-ministerial group as a start, we caused them to be different. And in the negotiating process, as things went by, presenting other perspectives. Because very often in the inter-ministerial group we had people saying no, we simply can't do this, we can't allow that, this isn't right, this shouldn't happen, this is the wrong thing, or I cannot sell this to my ADM, deputy minister, blah blah blah, this is wrong, this won't work. Well, think about it this way -- with another analysis, another perspective, a way to make the argument that is coming from the way the Aboriginal community is trying to achieve these things, translate it, broker it. Because very often in the business of hearing, of listening, it's not easy for people who turn off when they hit a certain word or a certain concept. And that's, well in that direction we've got to bring them back, recover from that misheard whatever. We did a lot of brokerage.*

It was this core group that lobbied effectively to engage the participation of other ministries. To prepare themselves to work in partnership with Aboriginal organizations, the group also did

some cultural sensitivity work with an Elder prior to the first joint meeting.

### **Partnership as a new experience for the Aboriginal organizations**

Participants from the Aboriginal organizations also discuss the change in relations from past experiences with government that adopting a joint approach engendered. As noted in Chapter Five, with respect to health policy, until this time Aboriginal issues had been treated as an "add-on" after new policies had been formulated. With respect to programming, Aboriginal organizations might be given funding but there was no actual relationship with a ministry that developed as a result. The two Elders interviewed for this study comment on joint policy development as a new experience for Aboriginal people. Both comment on the difference being invited into a process makes in terms of relationships and the overall positive feeling of having two historically opposed groups come together. The first Elder speaks in relation to the health policy and the second Elder refers to the family violence initiative:

*R1: And one of the things that I remember of what was told to me at the time was that this was the first time ever that we are going to get somebody from the Ministry to sit in with us to develop or design this. I thought that was kind of different. It was the first of its kind to do something like that whereas before either we were not informed or not told and there would be things you know, made on our behalf, sort of get after the fact type of thing or the other way was that we would be training and workshops on the wants and needs and the service that was done and then we ask whatever program or organizations we were asking help from wouldn't be there by the time we were ready, you know, our program was shutting down or whatever, so this was the first time. I just couldn't believe that the Ministry would be involved. I had worked with different organizations, you know, to write up policies, mostly community driven but nothing where we were going to have the two sides sit down at the same table.*

*R2: Initially, I guess when you have two different groups of people coming together to talk about healing, you know, to talk about wellness and it's not just your own community, it's not just your own people but it's also the whole. And so*



*I was excited to be a part of that because I think one of the things when you work with traditional people is that it does bring about that commonness. I mean that's one of the things that we try to do even in our staff meetings is just to start off with that quiet time. You know, reflecting and reminding each other we're going into a meeting here, let's do it using those good tools and the kindness and that way of doing things, let's try and work in that manner. And it seems to help. But of course this one was a larger group and so there's a lot more energy in there, you know, and it's different kinds of energy, it's different levels. So it's, it would be a lot more different.*

*We've always had problems working within our own people, in our own communities and our own Native organizations working together, coming together, and then to bring in like another party is harder because this other party, there will be, in the past we've always seen them as the oppressors, whether it's the church or the government or mainstream society, because they don't have that awareness or that understanding, that knowledge, they don't know, they have no inkling where we have been, where we come from.*

## **FROM "VISION" TO "KNOWLEDGE"**

As a new approach to policy-making, joint policy development can be seen as part of the vision that facilitated the development of AHWS. The shared power implied in a joint process opens up the question of "whose knowledge" would inform the process. Understood in both its critical and constructive dimensions, power is intimately linked to knowledge.

### **KNOWLEDGE**

#### **Moment: Determining "whose knowledge"**

In this initial round which is concerned with the politics of moving into relationship, knowledge as an essential dimension of the experience is explored in terms of the question of "whose knowledge" would guide the process. This question also contains the concerns of whose agenda would dominate and who would benefit from the policy-making process. These are

explicitly political and ethical issues which have to be negotiated in order for there to be a basis for "sharing knowledge". The clarification of these issues in terms of policy-making is similar to the kinds of questions researchers must ask themselves in designing studies. As discussed in Chapter Four, colonial mindsets and ethnocentric bias are constant challenges that non-Aboriginal thinkers must be cognizant of in working with Aboriginal people and their knowledges. The issue was no less important in the AHWS experience.

As discussed in Chapter Five, the position of the Aboriginal organizations was that the process should be Aboriginal-led with an Aboriginal focus based on Aboriginal knowledge of needs. Government would play "a supportive role" by providing resources for the work to go forward, such as funding a consultation on the issues.

### **Implication of an Aboriginal Focus**

Effectively, the position taken by the Aboriginal caucus reverses the historic relationship of government-led policy development in which Aboriginal people may have or may not have played a supportive role. It reverses the dynamic of policy being determined by means of Western knowledge ultimately destined for Western ends. It also undermines the paternalistic justification of policy undertaken for "the good of" x community.

This position also includes an explicitly stated expectation on the part of the Aboriginal participants that there will new programs and resources as an outcome of the exercise, otherwise why share their knowledge or engage in developing solutions with government?

## **Significance of the Aboriginal position**

The Aboriginal position can be read as simply good political savvy on the part of the Aboriginal organizations. However, I think the Aboriginal caucus intends two things at this stage that go beyond the issue of control over the policy-making process. First, they are pointing out to government the real implications involved in this new approach: from their subject position an Aboriginal focus is essential if the past experience of oppression is not to be repeated and if new ground is to be broken. I believe this to be very helpful to the government caucus: it is one thing to initiate "a new approach", it's another thing to know what it means or how to proceed. Guidance from SPR guidelines instruct people to behave on the basis of equality and respect but there are few guidelines on what this actually means in practice. In essence, the bureaucracy does not know how to conduct itself in this new situation. As documented in Chapter Five and reiterated here, a certain confusion persists within the government caucus throughout the whole four years. A senior government administrator reflects back on this internal struggle:

*I was trying to push my ministry toward embracing the Aboriginal agenda and understanding the amount of change that it had to do as a ministry to deal with the Aboriginal community. This is a very hard thing to overcome because people don't think of themselves as bad people, but they did not understand the history and they tend not to understand the conflict in perspectives. And they are also, even the ones who do understand this, are being pushed very hard, often by communities, where the political objective may not be the well-being of the people in the community. I mean there's a lot of cases where it's not. And so people struggle in their own consciences around those kinds of questions and so forth. So trying to get people to understand why as a whole and as a ministry, quite apart from any person's particular behaviour or whatever, quite apart from any of it, we could as a whole be classified as a big problem for the Aboriginal community and not very much welcomed, okay, and why that was and why we had to change in a fairly dramatic way, the way of working with the community. And why co-management had potential to get over some of those barriers where some of the service and the money that had to flow and the expertise and you could make a transition and you could do it in a responsible way, but one had to be*

*prepared to give up control in order to be able to achieve anything. And so from that point of view, I built on the conceptualization in the Healing and Wellness Strategy toward thinking about those implications for the ministry as a whole.*

Secondly, the Aboriginal organizations are signalling a willingness and readiness to take responsibility for a very difficult issue. A member of the government caucus comments that

*...the credit for it has to go really to ONWA as well as to the community themselves, because I think both, there was a readiness to receive the message with people working in government, but also I think it was critical that the ONWA report was not necessarily just pointing fingers everywhere, that there was a sense that the Aboriginal people themselves were ready to look at those issues, at responsibility for dealing with the issue. And I think, you know, there can be no shortage of credit given to that because I think that changed the dynamics as well...It was a very important issue to the community and to acknowledge that this has happened. So I think that got a sympathetic response and also, again, it helped set the stage for the process.*

Applying Leonard's ethical framework, it is my view that "assuming responsibility" for the issue provides a basis for respecting difference; in claiming the issue as theirs and naming the particular difference which exists in Aboriginal contexts, problems and thus, solutions will necessarily play differently than in mainstream society. In claiming their responsibility, the Aboriginal participants also provide a basis for non-Aboriginal solidarity in terms of political and financial support from the government.

### **"Dialogue" and "Learning by doing"**

The Aboriginal caucus provides a model in practice of "how to act" based on Aboriginal ways of knowing. Dialogue and learning through practice are hallmarks of Aboriginal pedagogy. Dialogue is modelled through open and frank discussion at the outset about the conditions, expectations, and outcomes of the exercise. The Aboriginal caucus states explicitly that from

their perspectives "working together" means that problems should be brought to the joint table to be worked through. In proceeding this way, they are encouraging a creative rather than a bureaucratic approach to problem-solving and policy development. Offered in the form of advice, one government participant describes this difference in approach:

*...You fundamentally must build relationships, above and beyond everything else, before you tackle this. If you haven't reached a level of trust and respect, honesty and integrity, shared by those who are tackling it, then you're going to be in trouble over and over again. So don't count on following your normal practices, policies. Start by assuming you must identify the players, you have relationships, and bring them together. Don't assume that you can pick a unit somewhere and then tell them to do this. You have to create something. It's a creative process, not a structural one.*

In effect, the government participants are initiated, in their words, into "learning by doing" rather than following a technical, rigid planning model which is pre-determined. Instead, the process unfolds in a way that many in government experienced as "novel" and "effective" even if difficult to get used to. Bureaucratic approaches do not disappear, rather they now stand in tension or in relation to a different way of thinking, being, and doing. A government participant reflects on the difference of these distinct yet related dimensions of the experience:

*The non-Aboriginal government people would tend to bring, what I was describing to you in terms of, there's a problem, we have to find out what the problem is, we have to develop the policies, we have to find a solution to it, that sort of very goal oriented kind of approach. And also we have to figure out, you know, what this ministry is going to do and what's that ministry is going to do and what are the police going to do, you know, very discrete pieces. And I think that the Aboriginal perspective that came back was very different from that, which was it's not a single problem, it's a whole set of problems that come from cultural and historical roots that are only going to be solved by a range of strategies and programmes, and that they're not going to be solved by figuring out what this guy over here is going to do and that guy over there is going to do. So it has to be a more integrated approach.*

*And I think that the First Nations people participating in this knew from the*

*beginning, knew that it was going to be very, very long term, and very wide in its scope, and I don't know that the government people going in and myself going in saw it that way at the beginning, like we saw it much more in terms of the specific policies, very discrete issues. You know, I think one of the things that I benefitted from and that I think other people benefitted from was also having the meetings and the process run in a more Aboriginal, or Aboriginal specific cultural way, having the opening ceremonies and the opening prayers and I think just getting the sense that you were in a different process and that people's different ways of doing things were being respected within that process. Because generally we don't do that in an office, right. We come to work, we go home, and we don't do any of those kinds of things that make people with different cultural experiences feel comfortable participating in the process. And so I think that process gave more, I suppose, respect and credence to different ways of doing things culturally.*

*And, you know, where I think you'd run in, where it becomes difficult is the things that, sort of my cultural needs which is all the paper and all the stuff written out and all the budgets and so on, and how you marry that up with what the community is talking about which is something very different, which has nothing to do with budgets or policy documents. So that was part, I guess, of bringing the two cultural perspectives together was how to respect both, how to get both done, but not overwhelm the community perspective by the needs of the more government culture.*

## **FROM "KNOWLEDGE" TO "MOTIVATION"**

The government has partial vision or insight about "a new approach" to dealing with issues and comes to understand the implications of the approach through dialogue with the Aboriginal caucus. However, knowing what is involved at an intellectual level is different than being committed in practice; "knowing" is not sufficient, even in political terms. Commitment demands other things; at the very least it compels us to look at and understand the motivations involved.

### **MOTIVATION**

One definition of "motive" is something that causes a person to act in a certain way or to do a certain thing. Four inter-related themes assist us in understanding motivation as a dimension

of the experience: intentionality, commitment, participation, and acceptance. The last theme implies a deeper level of commitment than an "intellectual" or "political promise" which can be changed or broken. In this way, motivation itself can be viewed as a process; motivation is not just one moment. In this round, we look at the initial moment which deals primarily with intentionality.

### **Moment: Willingness to Work Together**

#### **Mutual commitment to the issues on the political level**

If political will was the precondition for partnership, the commitment of all the organizations and ministries involved enabled it to happen in practice. Among those interviewed no one questioned the commitment to the process of either the provincial ministries or the Aboriginal organizations. In this respect, good will prevailed. As one government participant explains

*This was a hybrid because we were able to sustain political agreement at a very high level, on both sides, sometimes not always direct! It was not always easy, but at least it was there. And we were able to sustain at the fundamental staff level, on both sides, a concurrence, an agreement of what we trying to achieve. Because we had those two simultaneously, we were able to overcome all of the structural problems in between. And that was not something you can achieve every day.*

At the level of intentionality both sides also claim a similar commitment to the issue of family violence. In terms of the big picture, there is a stated political willingness on the part of the government to engage in the joint process. This reflects the values and beliefs of the Liberal and NDP parties to "do something" about the issue. The politicians are moved by the situation and are prepared to act on it.

The motivation to respond to these issues is also facilitated by two supportive ministers in the Native Affairs portfolio who give a consistent political response over two governments. Both ministers come with prior experience and take a genuine interest in Aboriginal issues. Their basic intention as stated in policy is to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal people in the province, who are recognized as the worst off when compared to the living conditions and life chances of other Ontarions. With respect to the NDP, one prominent Aboriginal leader confirms this view:

*I think probably the most critical thing was the NDP government and I think their attempt to try to deal with some of the principles that they set out. And one of the basic principles that they set out in their framework for dealing with Aboriginal people was that they wanted to deal with a better quality of life and out of that better quality of life they saw the need to be able to deal with all kinds of healing and family healing and all of the other things that were out there. And I know that in particular it was (identifies a Minister) who took a very strong view that if there was anything that the NDP government could do was in fact it could start this process of healing in the communities that was required, and being able to provide shelters, healing lodges, all those kinds of necessary instruments for us to be able to do a lot of that work in the communities and I think that that was probably the real turning point.*

Prior to their forming a government, the NDP had studied the serious health and social issues, including family violence, confronting northern Aboriginal communities in the province. Identifying living conditions as "unthinkable in any other part of the province", the report of the NDP's task force, entitled "First Come, Last Served" (1989), contains the outlines of what would later become the NDP's Aboriginal agenda. In policy terms, it meant that a number of MPPs, including the future Premier, were primed to act once in power, in the words of the report "to ensure equitable access to the conditions leading to good health" and to "promote a holistic approach to wellness" (p. 24). A government representative comments on the concrete benefits



this experience later had in terms of the AHWS process:

*On a broader level, and this is more connected to Aboriginal Health Policy, but with (identifies politician) trip up to Attawapiskat and up the James Bay coast, I think really changed the way in which she understood social conditions within Aboriginal communities. I think it had a really big impact on her, and she referred to it constantly in briefings that we'd had and in discussions around Healing and Wellness when she became Minister. It was something that had an impact on her. And that was an indirect educational experience that changed an internal dynamic. It made it easier sometimes to get doors opened when they would have otherwise been closed.*

In terms of the smaller picture at the working level of the bureaucracy, there is a core group of individuals from different ministries who, as noted earlier, are committed to "cause something to happen". However, while individuals say they are very committed, there are varying degrees of participation and commitment by some ministries. There appear to be multiple reasons for this and no single explanation. One government participant addresses the complexity of internal factors which both helped and hindered participation. The interplay between individuals and their ministries results in differing degrees of participation:

*So depending on the delicate balancing act, if you got a particular representative from the ministry that was more or less flexible, there was the possibility for that individual to influence the ministry processes and maybe make it more flexible than it would have been otherwise. Or, if the ministry was somewhat more flexible and could shape the individual. For instance, (names a senior administrator) was never supportive of Family Healing, but because of some of where (the person's ministry) was, you know, there was more support for Healing and Wellness than there would have been otherwise. So it's a combination of the two. And in some instances also, if you get an individual who wants to be somewhat cooperative but they're placed in a ministry that has no way, no routes at all for communication then that gets stymied. So I would have to actually almost comment on individual examples before I could say which took precedence.*

The new situation of working in a joint process shifts the bureaucracy's traditional role from "leading" to one of "support". Changed conditions means a continuous re-working of

motivations in order to know how to proceed. As a result, there is a constant internal conversation in the government caucus about whether they should simply "follow" the direction of the Aboriginal caucus or whether they should be presenting and negotiating from their own positions. There is also ongoing concern and anxiety about the government's ability to deliver on the expectations which have been created by the exercise. In terms of these issues, a government participant addresses the importance inside government of having a precedent for joint policy-making in the form of the post-secondary education strategy:

*I think there were a lot of similarities in Family Healing to what was going on in the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education strategy in the sense that government was involved, Aboriginal organizations were involved, on and off-reserve. They started off saying there's a problem, a systemic problem, what can we do to deal with it? They were trying to develop a strategy or a plan to change that systemic problem. One of the outcomes was to be money, or they hoped to have this money. There were issues of control around sitting at the table jointly and what government's role was going to be. So I think there were some similarities. I mean it was the first real process in my mind that had tried to do something like that, and it set the stage for Family Healing as a structural approach. Even though there were differences, it set some of the stages.*

*It was very fortuitous down the road, especially when we had some difficult periods in (names Ministry) towards the beginning where we could say, Family Healing was the first thing but there was something even before that, so like we're not such of a pilot project, that it's been done before and it worked, and they came up with a product and all of that kind of stuff. So you could make the point to players that it was a different way of doing business and that it could work. And that was always the biggest fear of people is that, well will this work? And you could say, well here's an example, and that relieves a lot of stress and tension about outcomes.*

### **The Challenges of Inclusivity**

In terms of the big picture on the Aboriginal side, the Aboriginal leadership and caucus are very committed to action on the issues; they want to end the violence and they want to

improve the health status of their people. However, they are divided by different political interests and lack of experience in working together. For example, some "on reserve" organizations resist working with "off reserve" and some on and off reserve organizations resist working with the Metis.

These divisions reflect the structure of oppression of Aboriginal peoples historically by Canadian governments: a framework of exclusion and separation from civil society and the creation of false divisions in order to control Aboriginal peoples. The carving up of Aboriginal identities into different categories has resulted in the conferring of differing rights and benefits which are managed by the State. Thus, some organizations have more to win by being involved while others fear losing certain entitlements. This concern is particularly evident in relation to health care for people living on-reserve or people with "status". Given the federal government's propensity to off-load responsibility to the provinces, First Nations, in this instance, feared the loss of certain federally-funded health benefits by becoming involved in a provincial-sponsored health initiative. Thus, in the initial period, at the working level there is internalized prejudice and mistrust present within the Aboriginal caucus.

Some on-reserve organizations also distrust the provincial government's motives in bringing all stakeholders together; participants express this in interviews as "forcing a political healing" and the attempt to create an "Aboriginal melting pot" which is viewed as a lack of respect for their Chiefs and for the formal political process. Thus, they argue for separate processes for on and off reserve groups within the overall process. However, other on-reserve organizations are willing to work with off-reserve groups in recognition that many status Indians live off-reserve and also require services. As one Chief stated:

*I think the other decisive factor has been in the Indian Act itself where the federal government continues to say, "Well, we're only going to be responsible for those status Indians who live on reserve", and programmes were designed around that whole notion of on-reserve, and when someone left, off-reserve, they became a provincial responsibility. And I think, in terms of dealing with what happens when our citizens move off reserve, we should be concerned about that...I guess in terms of what's happened here, I think the goodwill both with the Friendship Centres and some of these status organizations has led to this thing moving along.*

As a sub-text, this struggle results in two different outcomes. In the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy, all the Aboriginal organizations work together in one caucus; in the Aboriginal Health Policy, it is determined that two separate processes will go forward for on and off reserve groups which are to be rolled together later into one document.

### **Building Trust**

Apart from the specific issues affecting motivation and the willingness to work together discussed above, there is also a generalized issue of trust and mistrust as part of the legacy of colonization and the ongoing dynamics of domination which pervades the process. A government participant observes:

*There was also a lot of mistrust which was understandable as well as second guessing of the motives or views of various bureaucrats...In addition, the Aboriginal caucus had no reason to trust either the government or its representatives in this process. Even though the government claimed this to be a new approach and Aboriginal driven, I don't think I would have believed it either had I been in their position.*

While this issue will be explored more fully in the coming rounds, in terms of their commitment to working with the provincial government, the bottom line in Aboriginal terms is that "no one in the Aboriginal caucus walked away" from the table.

## **Sustaining commitment**

In relation to what helped to sustain people's commitment on both sides of the table, several factors are identified by participants. Clear leadership and the support and guidance of Elders emerge as particularly significant.

While credit is given to many players in the process, everyone acknowledges the particular role that the Aboriginal co-chair played in terms of overall leadership of the exercise.

From a government perspective, one participant states:

*I have always and I think I said to you and you sort of lived through it with me, that we would have never have gotten anywhere had it not been for (identifies Aboriginal co-chair) guiding us. There was no leadership and guidance on the government side...I thought the government caucus was an incredibly dysfunctional group, we haven't used that word before. I mean we wouldn't have gotten anything, content, process. I mean the Aboriginal co-chair had a vision, she had an idea, and she carried it, and I think she carried it for her side too.*

Elders helped to maintain the overall focus, reminding everyone about why they were there and who they were there for:

*Some of the other things that helped, at least much more in Family Healing than in Aboriginal Health Policy, because we did not do it as much in Aboriginal Health Policy, was using traditional people and elders. I think that for many of the Aboriginal organizations, that helped us to focus and remember the bigger picture, in terms of creation and spirit and all of those things. It helped us to remember to be good to each other and to be kind. Sometimes that did not always happen but at least there was some sense of recognition and respect for the fact that there were cultural people or traditions and reminders of spirit in the room.*

## **FROM MOTIVATION TO ACTION**

Moving around the circle, this round started from the idea of joint policy development, proceeded to understanding through dialogue the conditions which will allow it to happen, and

then discussed the motivations and interests which made participation in a joint process possible. At the level of political dynamics, this movement resulted in a common basis for working together and thus, did facilitate action.

## **ACTION**

### **Moment: Agreeing to act**

#### **Outcomes from negotiating difference on the political level**

On the formal level, two outcomes or actions result from the initial period of negotiation: first, there is agreement to proceed with a partnership between Aboriginal organizations and government ministries, which is formalized in terms of reference and secondly, there is agreement to do a mass consultation of Aboriginal people in the province on family violence and also a consultation on health issues.

On the informal level, this initial period of negotiation can be viewed as a time of testing and building relationships and trust on the political level. One government participant gives the example of developing the terms of reference as a process of people coming to know each other and where they stand. A word for word collective revision of the writing of the terms of reference while tedious as a task serves this intangible but all-important function:

*R: I think in the early days, and this may have had something to do with the relationship building and trust building between organizations primarily, but those first couple meetings that I was at, they were so tedious. I mean, nitpicky, you know, one word in the terms of reference this way or that way, and on and on a discussion would go. So it was like almost too much attention to detail, but I think on a broader level there was something else going on there, that maybe it needed to happen, but god it was painful to be in it.*

*I: What do you think was going on?*

*R: Well, that's why I say, I think what was going on was some relationship building*

*between on and off-reserve, probably, and between Aboriginal caucus and the government caucus. And they were building some trust. Everybody was discussing "what does that word mean?" "Well, does that get interpreted this way or that way?" I mean this is building trust and you know, "Who are you, you know, do I like who you are?" "Do I like how you interpret things?" Some of that was probably all going on there. But it took a long time in those first meetings that I was in...I mean fifty people picking apart individual sentences, it's like death by editing!*

Negotiating the terms for doing a consultation is also viewed by participants as a first test for the government regarding part of what it means to share power: in this instance it means of letting go of control of the consultation and handing over the necessary resources to the Aboriginal organizations. In turn, the Aboriginal caucus is able to exercise its power and assume responsibility for the consultation and to do it in ways that make sense in different organizational, geographical, and cultural contexts.

Respect for diversity emerges as a principle in practice which helps to create new political space for the Aboriginal organizations to act effectively. They resist being forced into a mould determined by government and in particular, a "one size fits all" approach to doing consultation; thus, they create room for different positions, interests and circumstances within a common purpose and task. Under their leadership policy development begins to shift from an isolated, internal planning process to a community-based approach aimed at the overall social well-being and development of Aboriginal peoples in the province.

With the groundrules for partnership established, the process moves from a focus on structure to creative development. Given the leadership role of the Aboriginal caucus and the "Aboriginal-focus" of both initiatives, this also means working from a cultural-based approach with experienced and inexperienced learners on both sides of the table. This moves us into a second cycle of learning where we return to "vision".

**SECOND GO AROUND THE CIRCLE**  
“the process of understanding and the dynamics of relating across difference”

**ACTION**

“Connecting across difference”

subjectivity affects behaviour

the retreat as a transformative event

learning and relating cross-culturally



**MOTIVATION**

“Experiencing Pain”

the subjectivity of colonialism

**VISION**

“Operationalizing a  
“cultural approach””

“cultural approach” brought by the  
Aboriginal caucas

success of AHWS and key to the deep  
structure of the process



**KNOWLEDGE**

“Generating “understanding””

understanding required

teaching and learning

forms of teaching

obstacles to “understanding”





## **SECOND GO AROUND THE CIRCLE**

### **"the process of understanding and the dynamics of relating across difference"**

"Cultural approach" is one way of naming the vision which the Aboriginal participants brought to the Strategy and to the partnership which produced it. A cultural-based approach to policy development moves us into the deep structure of the joint process. As such, it draws our attention to the dynamics of learning and relating across cultural difference. Teaching and learning occur in a variety of ways which touches people on many levels. In the process of coming to "understanding", issues of trust and mistrust, belief and lack of belief unfold. Moments of meeting across difference engender new awareness and help to establish the human relations that make working together possible.

## **VISION**

### **Moment: Operationalizing a "cultural approach"**

#### **Aboriginal "cultural approach" as deep structure of the process**

The provincial government invited Aboriginal participation on the basis of a different approach to policy-making. Yet in reality, this only served to open the door to the possibility of a different way of working. The Aboriginal organizations brought their own vision in terms of a culture-based approach to the process. As seen in Chapter Five, adopting a cultural approach is defined by participants as the key to success of the strategy. "Cultural approach" is contrasted

with "bureaucratic approach" and signifies a different process.

The "cultural approach" brought by the Aboriginal community embodies the essence of the vision which guided AHWS. "Cultural approach" as the essence of vision speaks to both the content of AHWS and the process by which it developed. In this round, we focus on "cultural approach" as the deep structure of the *process* while in the third round we will look more closely at "cultural approach" as the *content* of the vision. In moving into the substance of the vision in its two dimensions, we move beyond political positioning and rhetoric.

## **FROM VISION TO KNOWLEDGE**

Agreeing to an "Aboriginal focus" articulated as "cultural approach" has different implications for the two groups of people involved at the joint table. For government, it means the recognition of difference which in practice involves not only a different way of doing things but also involves a different way of thinking and being in relation to policy development. For the Aboriginal caucus, it is my view that it enables them to be, think, and act more from who they are because their cultural norms, values and leadership are no longer marginal but central to the Strategy and its development; "cultural approach" becomes the basis for empowerment within the process and within the Strategy itself.

## **KNOWLEDGE**

### **Moment: Generating "understanding"**

#### **Understanding required**

To be meaningful and effective, Aboriginal cultural approaches had to move beyond a

formal or intellectual recognition of difference. Because the Strategy involved a partnership with non-Aboriginal people, adopting a "cultural approach" necessitated an educational process. Working from an explicit cultural focus was also significant for several Aboriginal participants who in their own personal histories had been separated from their cultural roots.

With respect to the government representatives, the majority of whom were non-Aboriginal, the Aboriginal leadership recognized that substantive "understanding" was required to facilitate "buy-in" to the process. A government representative offers the following observation:

*In terms of the dynamics of the broader meeting, I think many of the organizations at the table, and certainly the Aboriginal co-chair, realized that unless you had buy in, unless you'd won hearts and minds of the government, of some of the government reps, that support that was at the table could evaporate very quickly. And so I think it was far more than developing a piece of paper or a document, it was also simultaneously a process of education and a very shrewd political approach to being able to put forward an ambitious agenda which required not only formal agreement, it required commitment. And the Aboriginal co-chair inspired them. I think she always knew that it required more than formal commitment in order to be able to take it through the massive hurdles that would exist between turning something that was a great idea on paper into something more workable.*

"Understanding" in a substantive sense moves us to a deeper level of interaction and dialogue. It meant that the non-Aboriginal representatives had to internalize and integrate new knowledge. Superficial understanding was not sufficient; as one government representative commented, "you had to be able to know what it means and not just repeat things". Real understanding facilitates true buy-in which in turn helps to effect the vision. "Understanding" is not just a sales pitch as a means to an end. The Aboriginal caucus recognized that at a deeper level the government representatives had to be educated so that they could act responsibly, be

able to contribute and do their job effectively. Being in a "supportive role" meant that government representatives had to be able to persuade their ministries and move the system. To accomplish that, they needed to be educated by the Aboriginal caucus.

Participants sometimes define "understanding" in terms of "getting it". "Getting it" is a kind of short form for grasping something deeply and fully: some "get it", some don't, and for some it is a learning curve. For example, both caucuses were highly aware of which politicians were "getting it": "a minister who got it right from the beginning", "another minister used her understanding of gender to help herself "get it"" ; a deputy minister who talks about "taking awhile" to catch on.

### **Teaching and Learning**

At the level of the Joint Steering Committee, while Aboriginal representatives speak of what they learned in the process, they often position themselves as teachers. For their part, with a few exceptions, government representatives position themselves primarily as learners. Adopting a cultural approach reverses the colonial dynamic of operating by the dominant culture's norms; thus, positions shift in favour of redressing the historic imbalance or exclusion of Aboriginality.

### **Ways of teaching**

Teaching "culture" takes many forms which draw on Aboriginal modes of learning: people are taught through practices, examples, and experience.

As commented on in Chapter Five, culture-based practices include: co-chairs which establishes joint and multiple authority; operating in two caucuses which gives people time to

work out issues and deal with their own differences; and decision-making by consensus which facilitates the dynamics of dialogue and ensures a deeper level of understanding.

Teaching by means of examples includes the actual teachings and stories told during meetings. A government participant recalls:

*Oh, I can remember many of the meetings would start with a teaching. I mean I can remember the Aboriginal co-chair talking about the berry fast, distributing strawberries at a meeting and talking about the way in which the strawberry symbolized family, community and nation, and its specific role in terms of women's teachings. That was a very concrete example of the introduction of traditional teachings as not somehow just a requirement for a formal opening, but as part of the process that was both an opening but also informed the work that was to be done.*

Experiential learning includes teaching moments like these and also the spiritual dimension of prayer, ceremonies like smudging, and rituals such as the greeting circle. Another government participant talks about the impact of learning in this way:

*It wasn't a forum where you sat and listened and got lectured at. You had to participate, you had to be involved in solving problems, coming up with solutions around defined tasks. So that engaging that behaviour had an influence on how people valued the event. Subtle, it's not subtle, but things like, it was the first time that I had experienced, for instance, the greetings that happen after the ceremonies where people go around in the circle and hug each other. In terms of conflict resolution, I know it comes from the traditions of the Aboriginal communities, but looking at it from the perspective of somebody who hadn't experienced it, all I could think of was: If we could only do this in other situations we'd get things done! Because it's real hard, you know, once you've engaged in that kind of physical contact, to not speak to somebody anymore...*

Learning also occurred in significant informal ways as part of the work. A government participant recalls the value of the direct experience brought by the Aboriginal participants for advancing understanding of the issues:

*With people working in a number of the groups you got an informal sharing of*

*experience. And it may be (names an Aboriginal representative) talking about what had happened around the suicide crisis, or talking about what the situation was at this community or that community. And for some of the people involved, that first hand knowledge of some of these events or some of these conditions, it really brought it home to roost. It's harder to treat the problems that you are discussing and the approaches you might take, it's harder to treat them in the abstract when the person from that community, or who has had to go out the next day to support workers responding to a suicide crisis, is then, sat next to you and is telling you about it. That sort of impact, it's really easy to sort of underestimate the impact that can have.*

Not only knowledge but also cultural values and norms are transmitted as much through this everyday kind of experience as through the more explicit teaching moments. In fact, one Aboriginal participant identified the living of values in the everyday experience as integral to a definition of culture in Aboriginal terms:

*You have to understand the sort of definition of culture that I work with, and it's the notion of bemadziwin, what Peter O'Chiese called it. He's talking about everyday good living. So he talks about the notion of balancing the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual. And he talks about that we have to apply what we know all the time. And so one could argue that there is a role for ceremony being only an aspect of culture. And so we prepared ourselves, I mean tobacco was offered a lot of times in the process in terms of saying we need help, we need guidance, we don't know what we're doing. Or, we're too smart for our own good, slow us down. That there were elders and traditional people who certainly regularly were involved in the process, from my perspective, in terms of at least talking and encouraging counsel, things like that...*

*...I think there were some values and beliefs that are fundamental to Aboriginal people. I think to natural people around the world, that so many people have moved away from that sort of natural state. And my grandmother never said that, she never talked about culture, she talked about common sense. You know, that you should just have common sense. Do you know what I mean? When the birds sing you should be happy the birds are singing. You shouldn't have to be told, go offer your tobacco and welcome the birds back. You know. That when the ice goes and the water is there and the children are about to swim that you should offer tobacco to the water so that it doesn't take anyone. She would just say, like that's common sense, like why do you have to be taught common sense, she would say. And so Peter's notion, you know, moving from my grandmother's to everyday good living, then I would suggest it was all pervasive. It was a part of who we*

were.

A poignant example of values lived in practice that facilitated learning for the non-Aboriginal participants and impacted the process is offered by a government representative:

*The giveaways that would take place, I mean it was part of a celebration of work done, but there was also another aspect to it. It was simply by building into a process that sort of event, it also served to solidify some of the bonds that had been built up in process of pulling together Family Healing. And just as much as humour is traditionally recognized as a healing property, I think there was strong recognition on the part of a number of people in the Aboriginal caucus that the process itself at times was incredibly difficult for people involved with it. And so it married together, not only lip service to the idea of humour, healing properties of humour, but it was built into the process, it was built in, and you know, I think back to the meetings, many of the meetings, I think, were always broken by humour at some stage, as tense as it got there was always a recognition of the need for an outlet, and building in things like the giveaway, I think, structurally, is part of the broader spectrum of the way work got done. Again, it was completely out of the normal for the average government bureaucrat; you don't get invited to these things, yet at the same time it was part of building the broader consensus, it was part of building a broader commitment I think.*

The variety of teaching and learning in formal and informal ways and the consistency with which it occurred in practice served to create a particular environment based on "a cultural approach" which is distinct from that of "bureaucratic culture"; government representatives describe it as both "vibrant" and more "human". The presence of Elders helped to sustain this quality of humanity in the process and in doing so reinforced Aboriginal values which are first and foremost about relatedness. In the following reflection, an Aboriginal participant reflects on the intentionality and impact that cultural practices had on the process:

*Well, I think they had the effect they were supposed to have for the most part. Having the elder there, had I think the immediate understanding even of people who didn't really at that point get it, was an understanding of respect, at a minimum kindness is what should be practised and there was something else. The other part was breaking the physical barriers when we had the welcoming circles and some joked about it because it was like, oh my favourite part, the hugging is*

*coming up. But it allowed for breaking down some real barriers and you know, physically embracing somebody and welcoming them and for each individual as you go around the circle.*

Even though cultural practices aimed at removing obstacles to relationship pervaded the process, some obstacles to understanding remained.

### **Obstacles to "understanding"**

Cultural difference expressed as difference made teaching "frustrating at times" as one

Aboriginal representative comments:

*I guess it was a teaching, a dual role, teaching and also learning too at the same time, politically, and how hard it is for somebody, a different religion or different way of life that they've been raised with, you know, their different values and beliefs, totally, I should say totally clash, you know. When you talk to somebody whose beliefs are different, they were raised differently, when they were raised in a church, when they erred, they made a mistake they'd go to confession and they're absolved, whereas with us, in the native way there's a different way. We look at things wholistically, what goes around comes around, you pay somehow. It may not be today, it may be tomorrow, maybe next year, but you pay for whatever. A frustration we felt, and I know speaking to, when we had elders there, it was difficult trying to teach some things that were totally new to some people, they've never heard it before and they've never heard of these things, how we look at things, how we parent, the birthing, how we raise children, and how at some point children are on their own later on, that raising them, you don't raise them right and then somebody's going to pay consequences if they're not taught right. And that's the parenting teachings that we've lost because of the television or whatever, that are not native. So a lot of these things, and I think mostly spiritual, is the spiritual part of it that was very difficult, very frustrating, you come away frustrated sometimes because even our own people didn't, some, not all of them, most of our own Aboriginal participants knew the traditional teachings, especially from the north, but from southern Ontario, it was sort of difficult sometimes to help them understand the traditional ways of the Creator, the creation stories. And the ministries, you know, the ministry reps too, it was hard at times.*

There is also a dynamic below the surface concerning what blocks understanding or gets



in the way of dialogue and learning across cultural difference. Colonialism is a sub-text and its effects are present. It can be heard in the voices of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants. Members of the Aboriginal caucus speak of having to "convince" government; they carry a deep sense not only that government does not "understand" but also does not "believe" them. The following four examples refer to the process and the content of a cultural-based approach to learning:

*R1: And I recall too, there was a time when even the ministries were sort of looking at this and didn't seem to, we felt that they didn't seem to have any faith in what we were doing, in the process, and it took quite a bit of trying to convince the ministries, this is how we're going to do it. And I recall one time, it was an old person, I remember that, there was a comment made like, "How are you going to do it?" We were telling them how this process, how these consultations, how we're going to put it together, it seemed like maybe this person was looking at it as an impossible task, looking at all these reams of information that we had to go through in detail, how they saw family violence was affecting communities, in all communities all across Ontario, and sort of reluctantly, you know, didn't think that we would be able to accomplish that.*

*R2: Mainly, I guess the judicial aspect of it, that was one of the barriers we had to go through. There was, you know, convincing them, trying to sway them, you know, it could work, it has to work because the old ways, when you talk to the elders, the old people, that's how they used to do it, they had their own way of doling out consequences, not punishments but consequences for somebody's misdeeds, that's how it was done. I don't know if that answers your question.*

*R3: I may be wrong, but I tend to think that it was the cultural and traditional values and beliefs of the native people that kind of put it together, and it was that alone that needed a lot of convincing to the ministries who are, the majority are non-native and very bureaucratic and very difficult to see the spiritual aspect of native people and the healing process. It was very difficult for them to understand or to believe that. Our culture and our traditions are very strong in our lives. And I think that the turning point was convincing them of that and once they began to, I don't know, I know many times we were, we came away feeling that we weren't convinced that they believed us.*

*I: What gave you that sense that you weren't being believed or heard?*

*R3: You can sense when somebody is kind of, what's that word, pretending, not pretending but kind of, you can sense it, you know. I use my senses a lot and in my early twenties I used to go for counselling, you can tell when your counsellor is uneasy with you as a non-native counsellor. You can sense it without even, you can't put your finger on it but you can sense it, and then you feel like you don't want to trust this person or you don't tell this person all that person is asking you, so you lie a little bit and you lie a little bit because this person, you know, you can sense it, you can feel it in, for me, the pit of my stomach is what tells me when something isn't right. And for many people, I've talked to many people, there's ways that they can sense what they're feeling, so. It's hard to describe that, but you could sense it and we did sense it, that we could almost point out who was giving off those vibes of almost like a childish, treating us like children. "Okay, this is how you want it, you want to do it, we'll try it this way", almost like a, there's a word for that and I just can't,*

*I: Paternalistic?*

*R3: Yeah, that's it. Yeah, it's just, you can sense it, you can feel it and that's one of the frustrating things that we had to deal with. And I guess especially coming from our end, from the north area.*

*R4: Well, I did hear it from two or three people, I won't identify who, that government isn't going to like this or they're expecting that we're going to fall on our face kind of thing. I mean those comments were actually identified but in an aside kind of way. And also there was a feeling when actual good work was done or exceptional work was done and there was sort of an aura of surprise I think on certain ministry reps.*

Similarly, government representatives express a certain frustration, stated most explicitly as: "they didn't believe that we could understand, they were always emphasizing difference". Given radically differing subject positions, this questioning of the other's capacity for understanding persists. As one representative observed "both groups bring their baggage to the table". Trust and mistrust, hearing and not hearing, understanding and not understanding co-exist.

## **FROM KNOWLEDGE TO MOTIVATION:**

This dynamic surrounding "understanding" affected the quality of dialogue and the depth of relationship possible. It leads us to explore further the emotional dimension present in people's motivations.

## **MOTIVATION**

### **Moment: Experiencing Pain**

#### **The subjectivity of colonialism**

Several texts reveal the emotional dimensions to knowing present in the government caucus. Unresolved feelings in turn affected their behaviour. Fear is one emotion that several government respondents discuss:

*I think that the building process in this was building toward a respect. And that at the outset we were dealing with fear and we were dealing with prejudice. And I mean at all seats at the table.*

In other contexts, we know that if students are blocked by fear, they will resist learning. There appears to be both an external and internal dimension to the fear that some government participants experienced. The internal, unexpressed fear is that of being accused of being anti-Aboriginal or of being racist if they did not agree or understand. As commented on by government participants, fear leads to dishonest behaviour on the part of some in their caucus. It takes the form of promising what they could not deliver and trying to please the Aboriginal caucus:

*R: I think early on, too, with some of the ministries, they seemed not to have any*

*idea why they were there. That was my impression. I mean, I can't say somebody said something to me directly, but it was like many of them had never been involved, probably some of them had never even met an Aboriginal person, certainly had never been involved in an Aboriginal process. I think they were scared of working with Aboriginal people, were really worried about saying anything negative or criticizing anything. When you talk about weaknesses of the process, I think ultimately those came to be some weaknesses.*

*There were people sitting in the government caucus who never wanted to question anything that the Aboriginal organizations said they needed or wanted. And so that's not a process if people aren't being honest about it because of fear. Now, misguided or rosy glasses or whatever it is, but it was very odd for me personally because I'd come out of an Aboriginal environment. So I wasn't afraid of anything that was going on. I'd been there before. And it was like, why are you people all so afraid here, you know?*

*I: So what was the reluctance? What was it do you think? What was the fear?*

*R: I just think nobody wanted to say anything negative.*

Fear affects the government caucus as a whole; it manifests in a deep ambivalence about how to act and a lack of clarity regarding what they should be saying or doing. External articulations of fear include a sense of feeling intimidated by the Aboriginal co-chair and fearing joint meetings:

*RI: It has a lot to do with fear. It had to do with the Aboriginal co-chair's way of running a meeting, it had to do with well, we're not really sure of our role, the part of it that was government. What can we really say? We're policy analysts. People didn't necessarily have a lot of confidence, maybe that meant their ministries weren't totally behind them.*

*On an ordinary day, things were fine, congenial, but depending on the subject, depending on what maybe had happened before the meeting or in Aboriginal caucus or whatever, or what stage we were at, it could be very changeable. And I think that, because of that thing, the antagonistic, the distrustful, the whatever, for people who were less confident in government, that added to the fear and trepidation about meetings because you weren't ever really quite sure what was going to happen at the meetings. So if you walk in and you don't know what you're going into, or it could be a bad meeting or the last meeting you had a bad*

*experience, I mean you start to not want to be there on a personal level, and that then starts spinning back down into your individual relations and your commitment and everything else...But I always felt that there was this imbalance in the room. Maybe partly because I felt that imbalance when really important things needed to be said.*

*R2: It could be incredibly intimidating, I happened to not have been intimidated by it, but I had come with experience. I think that's one of the things that motivated them to say things. I could think of two people in particular around that table who would say things because of the fear of intimidation, wanting to look like not obstructive bureaucrats but positive moving forward on the issue.*

Others in government could take the sense of being tested in their stride as a kind of rite of initiation. In the following, a government participant views this kind of challenge as constructive in terms of engendering honesty in the process:

*We used to have a joke that every new person that came on to the government caucus, we would just watch the Aboriginal co-chair roast them. It was an ordeal by fire. Everyone who came on that was new would be put over the hot coals once or twice by her, just to put them in their place. And having been warned of all this, walking straight in, leaping in with both feet into a fight on (names a social issue). And to see her in operation is incredible, incredibly impressive. I think she's one of the sharpest political minds that I know...*

*It wasn't good enough to go to a Family Healing meeting and nod in agreement, or offer a mealy mouthed ministry position, unless you were prepared to either fight your ground if you had serious disagreements, and consensus doesn't mean that the process of getting to consensus wasn't sometimes quite bloody, I mean sometimes it was. But I think that placed demands on people that were necessary, almost as a test. And I don't think it was, nobody would ever conceive it as that, but if you could come through, if you could face, if you had major disagreements and couldn't bring them to the table of the steering committee and argue them there and discuss them there, how the hell were you ever going to take anything internally and fight on it internally. And the Aboriginal co-chair sensed that, really sensed that. There was always the sense of her forcing it to the stage where people had to put their cards on the table.*

Guilt was another motivating factor: being confronted indirectly with their position as colonizers leads to behaviour to compensate by trying to please:

*I think some of it has to do with, it's a cross-cultural thing. Well, not cross-cultural, it's being in a cultural situation and not being sure, not wanting to offend, wanting to believe, feeling guilt, I think it's all of those things all wrapped up in there. You know, not wanting to let people down after all the work they'd done for two years, I mean that could have all been part of it.*

An elected official speaks directly to the issue of guilt from the status of a politician in leadership; guilt is articulated as destructive of social relations in that it sustains inequality and prevents true dialogue:

*I mean I got accused of this a lot, that I was some kind of a bleeding heart and that I felt a lot of guilt and I was trying to put guilt on the white community and the non-native community. Guilt is a very, very negative thing. It is not positive in any way. And I think one of the reasons I had a good relationship, and I hope I still have a good relationship with the Aboriginal people or the Aboriginal leadership in Ontario, is because I don't have that at all. It's just practical. It's just a question, alright, we've got these problems, how do we resolve them? How do we move ahead? We don't forget about what happened before. We have to acknowledge it and understand it.*

*But I'll be very frank, I've been in meetings where Aboriginal leaders have tried to guilt me into things, and I've basically told them right to their faces, this is bullshit, you know, this is not what I'm about. I mean if there's a legitimate reason for doing something that is going to respond to a need and move us forward, fine, let's talk about it. But don't tell me I have to give you this because my ancestors somehow ripped you off because that is not a good starting point, you're not starting as equals, you're not starting as people who respect one another for their abilities and their qualities, you're trying to twist somebody's arm and make them feel bad in order to get something, and nothing positive can come out of that as far as I'm concerned. Far better to be very straight with each other and just sort things out on a basis of mutual respect.*

*And I think because of that I was able to say what I think and they were able to say what they thought. It meant we sometimes had very difficult arguments. But I didn't have any problem saying what I think to a Native person, and I hope they've never had any problem saying what they think to me because I had no problem saying to them. And I wasn't afraid of offending because in my view, and I may be wrong on this, but this is just me, in my view, that's just reverse racism. If I'm afraid to say something to another person because I'm afraid that he'll take it the wrong way because I'm of a different racial origin, then that's no basis for real discussion. I obviously wouldn't say something insulting to someone, to offend*

*them, anyone, of any group, but if I really think that they're just trying to pull the wool over my eyes, I'll tell them. And I expect them to do the same to me. And, basically because what you're doing is, in that approach, you're respecting each other as equals and you can talk to each other as equals. I'm not up here in some position of authority and the Native leader is not down here trying to beg for funds because I've got all the money, which is a real problem in terms of the relationships between Aboriginal governments and non-Native governments in Canada.*

It is evident that members of the government caucus were at various stages of working through these feelings in terms of motivations. In this regard, a useful concept employed in anti-racist work is that of "white privilege". McIntosh (1989) explains that

*As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something which puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see some of its corollary aspects, white privilege which puts me at an advantage. I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege...I was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group (p. 10).*

Thus, white-skinned people are conditioned to expect their right to exist whereas members of racial or ethnocultural minorities are often expected by the dominant white society to 'prove' themselves. This relates directly to the experience Aboriginal members had of not being 'believed' and their felt need to 'convince' as a constant requirement to 'prove' themselves. Thus, it is my view that some members of the government caucus are confronted with but do not necessarily understand their own position of white privilege; unacknowledged privilege can only comprehend the experience of others and the process of "othering" in very limited and often distorted ways.

In terms of the Aboriginal caucus, the emotional dimension of motivation relates to their "understanding" as insiders. For many, there was a personal dimension to the issue of family violence. Knowledge of the issues was not abstract but part of their lived experience. Also, a

number of representatives, who were new to policy work with government, brought with them their experience of working on the front lines in Aboriginal communities.

Thus, for example, the Aboriginal caucus "knew" that the consultation would unleash "Pandora's box". They anticipated that the consultation would reveal the magnitude of pain and the scope of issues as experienced in many communities throughout the province.

In terms of the joint process, one Elder commented on the inner dynamic of the retreat where the consultation findings were shared: "we shouldn't have to reveal pain to convince or teach others". Doing so placed the Aboriginal caucus in a very difficult and painful position: "It's difficult to deal with internally when you have to engage with the oppressor externally".

An implication which emerges in terms of motivation and the ability to engage in joint work is identified by several Aboriginal members as requiring "people who are far enough along on own healing journey". To sustain a commitment in a joint process "people have to be pretty involved with their own value system".

The inner dynamics of the joint process discussed here did lead eventually to increased understanding. A government representative talks about this as an evolving respect and ability to communicate:

*Through this process we arrived at respect, which I think we mutually held pretty well. And those that went out of line knew it, and were told it, and had elders speak with them about it. And that was good. That I think was the fundamental shift that took place in being able to arrive at what we arrived at.*

*I would say another dimension of the matter, communications, the capacity to speak and to be heard, that I think also evolved. People's voices became clearer through all of this, as they paid more attention to the facts and less to blaming and looking for causes and really began to deal with what really are the facts of this, both internal to government, like what are the real processes we have to live with, and what are, in the community, the real processes of the kind that I was*



*speaking of before, where Chiefs simply do not want women organizing, thank you very much. The real facts. So that there was an openness that developed through this where people were being less protective of what really is happening. And that's painful, very painful.*

## **FROM MOTIVATION TO ACTION:**

Adopting a "cultural approach" is no mere formality; it involves a complex set of dynamics that affects both caucuses, their positionality and ultimately their relationship to each other. It reveals some of the barriers to working together on both cognitive and emotional levels. History is not past but present in complex ways. Understanding/not understanding affects the ways in which people relate to each other. Action, understood as that which facilitates understanding and relatedness, will be highlighted next.

## **ACTION**

### **Moment: Connecting across difference**

#### **Subjectivity affects behaviour**

Subjectivity affects relating and learning as two kinds of behaviour that constitute dimensions of acting. In this regard, the vast majority of participants indicate that the family healing retreat at Elmhurst was a transformative moment in terms of increased understanding and an ability to relate better to each other and to the whole exercise. While some aspects of this event are described in Chapter Five, in light of the theme of difference in this second round, it is important to highlight certain other dynamics that facilitated this inner movement.

## **Dynamics of the retreat**

In retrospect, the retreat emerges as a complex event which challenged people physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. It took the participants on a personal as well as collective journey that went far beyond the stated task of consolidating the consultations. On the physical level, a number of participants commented on the positive impact of being away from their offices in a country setting. As one government participant noted, it helped to free people's thinking and ground their understanding of the issues on a more human and less political or technical basis:

*I think you know in one sense that it removed us from the bureaucratic setting which meant that we perhaps stopped thinking in all these little boxes that we tend to think in around here. And I think you had to deal with people one on one and you know, the issues, the human issues seemed to come through a lot more clearly and they weren't smothered by a whole lot of political stuff that we would normally have to deal with. There weren't phones ringing, you didn't have other pressures...I think people seemed freer and more comfortable particularly on the government side to maybe make decisions about what they would take back to their ministry.*

Similarly, rooming together provided people with an opportunity to get to know one another on a more interpersonal level. An Aboriginal participant comments on how this brought people together in a way that had not occurred before:

*The Aboriginal Family Healing brought us together. That retreat really cemented the players. We'd go back to our own rooms in the evening and just sort of think in singular terms. We were housed, and I guess the way the lots were drawn, you know, there'd be perhaps an on-reserve with an off-reserve and a government technician, you know. We would be roomed together and therefore respect, understanding.*

In addition to working together, spending a prolonged period of time also facilitated playing together. Social events enabled people to become known to one another and to see each

other more fully. A government participant reflects on how the social dimension helped to break down the invisible barriers of typecasting:

*I mean the things you remember most are like the icebreaker exercises, the kind of games, calling over people, one where you couldn't make a facial expression or move your face. These are the kind of icebreaker exercises that were fun, but also got people to see you differently. As I recall, karaoke singing, you know, afterwards. And it seemed like it was really important that we all had fun together, making fools of ourselves on stage, and seeing a different aspect of people. And I think it was kind of a mutual tendency to see people as representatives of whatever they were representing, well this is what a government person is, this is what a First Nations rep. is.*

An Aboriginal participant makes a similar observation regarding barriers dissolving and notes how people's behaviour changes as a result: relationships form, participants "mix" more and a sense of collectivity emerges:

*I think it was the beginning of the creative process. It didn't hurt that we were all isolated out there either. Well, that's probably where the group came together and was more cohesive. Part of it is, it was structured differently. In the meetings we were always Aboriginal caucus at one end of the circle, like one half and government the other half. Very little mixing. Coffee breaks and smoke breaks. And that kind of thing happened at Elmhurst where we eliminated some barriers, some big barriers. Like just the perception that you're government and you're not and I'm not going to get close enough to touch you or work with you. And I guess I do mean that in sort of a prejudiced kind of way.*

*Everybody has perceptions and whether or not they're right and maybe they are right but it doesn't mean that those barriers have to stay. There were people that maybe didn't think they could work as closely together with the mixed bag of people that were there that they thought they could. That also happened between the ministries as well. So relationships were formed between different people and some other ministries where they didn't have any contact and really didn't work together. So I think it happened. And the same thing happened with the Aboriginal caucus between on and off reserve. All of the barriers sort of dissolved and then there was an expectation to get barriers out of the way and let's get the work done. And a good idea is a good idea regardless of who's the author of the idea, you know....It's not something you do by design but you try to do by design. They happen or they don't.*

People's attitudes and behaviour toward each other were also affected by the spiritual dimension of the experience. While such outcomes cannot be "planned", the conditions were created for this to occur. As a government participant observes, the presence of Elders and the involvement in ceremonies helped to change dynamics in the group as a whole:

*There were all kinds of things, the greeting circle, the including of elders and having the opening ceremonies put things in context for you. [The involvement of elders] at certain points in time I believe helped to shape behaviour too so that, you know, it was strategic in so much as by forcing, yeah forcing in some instances, forcing people to be there in a three day problem solving, sharing environment, how to move the strategy forward, I think was critical.*

The effects of the retreat on the government representatives are that they feel less like "outsiders" and "bureaucrats" and feel more respected as persons. They communicate a sense that some of the distance of cultural difference on emotional and spiritual levels is bridged through this extended sharing. Becoming known to one another facilitates understanding on cognitive levels as people begin to interact more easily. The retreat also serves as a common reference point for the participants afterwards; time is marked as before and after "Elmhurst".

The particular effects of the retreat on the Aboriginal caucus are less visible but no less tangible. For many of the Aboriginal participants, sharing the content of the community consultations means reliving much personal pain:

*And in mid-session, I don't honestly recall either it being said, or a lot of tears because a lot of the persons present had experienced exactly what we were all there in the broader way to deal with, to talk about, to brainstorm on. And here, a huge number had first hand, you know, and it tended to come out. I thought about something that sometimes, I don't know, I get too caught up in the paper aspect of things, and you know, the typical bureaucracy, suddenly there was this enormous human aspect always surfacing... So that's during the day or the working period, but also in the evenings, and therefore there was a lot more call for us to turn to elders that had been brought in as well.*

Another member of the Aboriginal caucus describes the tension that emerged from within and the resources the group drew on to sustain and care for themselves during the retreat:

*There were two or three elders there. And as far as trying to coordinate that meeting, (names the Aboriginal co-chair) was definitely feeling some pressure in that process. Feeling some sense of losing control or something. Maybe not losing control but feeling pressure from the groups and people were complaining about this and that. It could have been a not good experience that week and because the elders that were there did address group and did intervene but because of what they were seeing happening in the room.*

*And sometimes the intervention wasn't so much that they verbally addressed everybody as just doing something quietly in the room. Maybe not everybody would have known what was really going on. Something as simple as taking the smudge around the room is intervention and those things were done. I remember in that instance when the people were having rough times in sharing what was going on personally for them in the process, people were getting a little raw because it was really intense work. You have organizations that have their own political agendas and so the individuals in that organization carry that political agenda, bring it into the room and start personalizing it. "I can't work with that person because they work for that organization." So that stuff starts entering and they forget about the purpose of what that strategy was. Sometimes certain people around the room would nod at each other and point at the smudge. Some of us would jump up and get smudges ready and take it around. And so things like that just happened when things got a little tense or perceived as tense, and when things could of really got sidetracked by emotional responses as opposed to remembering what we were there for. So I think that really helped as well.*

Another participant relates the intensity of the pain felt to the collective responsibility which people, primarily in the Aboriginal caucus, carried. In effect, what was being lived through was the transition from violence to healing:

*And it was a long process owning it. Even the committee itself, and our disclosures and our talk with each other, both in caucus and with the elder, and then ultimately the Joint Steering Committee. But we would say things about us, you know, about being in the Children's Aid, about being sexually assaulted, or other people having other stories. And so we had wrapped all this up in this package that we were creating called Family Healing, I mean originally called Family Violence, and at Elmhurst the elder said to us, make it positive. We went to Elmhurst wanting it to be Family Healing now, not wanting it to be Family*

*Violence. And she wasn't the only one. We went and we talked to another highly respected elder. I talked to my own clan mother and tried to explain what we were doing. And several of them said to us, "Look, don't carry it around." I remember telling my clan mother on the phone how my shoulders hurt, like I'd never felt pain, and she said, "Well, what are you carrying?" And I thought, gee, our organization is carrying the pain, the responses of 1300 people, our contribution of 6,000 or 7,000 interviews. And I wasn't the only one. [Name] was getting sick, [name] was getting sick, I mean all these people were, you know, and the elder herself was finding it a hard time to come to meetings, partly because of time, but partly because of all the work she had to do to try to take care of us. So there was a lot of process in terms of our own personal development and in terms of the organizations and in terms of the way our involvement was.*

One of the Elders present at Elmhurst reflects on the nature of the struggle participants were experiencing and the importance of having resources available to the group to enable their own empowerment and that of the communities through the process:

*Elmhurst was very difficult. I guess it has a lot to do with, when you look at pain, when you look at sorrow, it's hard no matter how you try to be diplomatic about it, because our problems are deep rooted and they go back a long ways, you know, it's generations, it goes back to our ancestors. And I believe that we carry that in our genes.*

*There wasn't that understanding, and it's like you have to educate them, you have to sensitize them, you have to bring them to a place. And we haven't even done that with our own people, because a lot of our own people are still in that sorrow, they're still in that grieving. And so one of the really neat things about getting involved with this is that there would be monies available to help with that process and to help them to empower themselves, to help them gain a good sense about themselves, their self worth, to regain their self-esteem, you know, their lives back and their traditions, their teachings, and a good way of life, just that wellness, to feel good about themselves again. But it's like we have to educate these other ministries first in order to get that money, to get those resources so that we could heal ourselves, and that's hard to do, that was hard to do. It's almost like we had to expose and open up those wounds to show them, to show them where we have been and that was hard because whenever you have to re-open old wounds, you know, and it's like it takes you back there, you have to relive it.*

The deep connections that people were experiencing coalesced with the intentions of the

Strategy. A ministry representative remembers the excitement of the Aboriginal caucus "coming to one mind" when some directions and definitions began to surface in the meeting. A member of an Aboriginal organization recalls being emotionally exhausted in ways perhaps not readily apparent to the government caucus but also acknowledges the clarity that emerged and the sense of empowerment which resulted.

The inner dimensions of this event reveal insights on two levels. In terms of partnership, the format of a retreat provided the right environment for people to connect on deeper levels and thus to bridge not only the cultural divide but also the tension between belief and disbelief underlying it. A member of the Aboriginal caucus expresses this as the accomplishing of trust in the Aboriginal community:

*Trust, trusting the process and the teaching that had gone on in the committee meetings prior to that particular event, the retreat, it all led up to that trust in the Aboriginal community and the Aboriginal elders and the traditional people that were there, were going to take care of the group, and there was a lot of trust from lots of people in that group not just the Aboriginal people that knew things were going to be okay. There was a couple of times where it could of just blown up and it didn't. But nobody left, nobody ran out screaming, crying, freaking out. Everybody stayed until the end and that was a feat.*

On a broader level with respect to joint policy-making, the gap between consultation and policy development was also bridged. An Aboriginal focus was now clearly established in a process led by the Aboriginal leadership. Rather than usurping the process this served to achieve the inclusivity necessary to make partnership a reality. In overcoming the more usual exclusivity or dominance by government, the process could go forward. Referring to both the family healing and health initiatives, a member of the Aboriginal caucus articulates this in more concrete terms and reflects on the ultimate results:

*R: The other thing that was significant was the fact that they were both inclusive committees and there was dialogue and that there was an interaction, that there was a continuum that was going to keep both parties at the table, the Aboriginal community and the government. That it wasn't just, "Okay, we'll do the consultations, and then thank-you for your input, we'll take that and we'll develop whatever we are going to develop because that is what we wanted it for anyway." But it was inclusive so that was strategic; maintaining a commitment, both sides to stay at the table, to jointly develop whatever was coming out of the consultations that was extremely significant and strategic. There have been other experiences where the government consults and then they go and squirrel away and you either see or don't see anything because it was not an inclusive interactive process.*

*I: What impact do you think that had on the outcome of both processes?*

*R: I think both processes were much more inclusive and reflective of what the Aboriginal communities actually said because it was Aboriginal people interpreting and analyzing and gleaning from that stuff as opposed to non-Aboriginal interpreting from a culturally biased view point. That was significant. So you have two documents that reflect Aboriginal people, much better reflect Aboriginal peoples' concepts of healing and wellness and health and that kind of stuff.*

## **CONCLUDING THE SECOND CIRCLE**

"Cultural approach" is one way of naming the vision which the Aboriginal participants brought to the Strategy and the partnership which produced it. As examined in this round, it provided the deep structure of the process by which the Strategy would be developed. Thus, in this cycle, I have addressed some of the dynamics involved in coming to "understanding" when involved with a culture-based as distinct from a bureaucratic approach. Such a process reveals that the history of oppression in Aboriginal-Canadian relations is ever-present and is carried by the participants on both sides. Beginning from a place of mistrust, movement occurs through moments of "meeting" across distance in a variety of ways. These "moments" in process time generate new awareness and help to establish the human relations that make working together



possible. In the next round, we examine the other dimension of the vision brought by the Aboriginal community: culture-based solutions to the issues.

# THIRD GO AROUND THE CIRCLE

**“healing and wellness”**

## ACTION

**“Translating across cultures”**

translating the Aboriginal Health Policy report

translating the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy report



## MOTIVATION

**“Sustaining participation”**

do what works

unbalanced responsibility

engendering commitment through collectivity

small groups facilitate participation

## VISION

**“Conceiving new solutions”**

**“healing and wellness” as the heart of AHWS**

essence of “cultural approach”

vision of self-determination



## KNOWLEDGE

**“Conceiving new solutions based on old knowledge”**

**“healing” as “recovery from” and “becoming”**

the wholistic paradigm and the struggle of two logics

the healing continuum

**“wellness” and the wellness paradigm**



## **THIRD GO AROUND THE CIRCLE**

**"healing and wellness"**

### **VISION**

**Moment: Conceiving new solutions**

#### **Healing and wellness as the heart of the Strategy**

The heart of the vision and the essence of "cultural approach" are captured by the words "healing" and "wellness". Thus, it is important to understand what these words mean in the broader Aboriginal context and what they came to mean in the context of the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy and the Aboriginal Health Policy. For lack of a better term, I will refer to them as concepts. However, as concepts which have culturally-specific meanings I understand them to be evolving and dynamic and not fixed and static. In concrete time, this round refers to the phase of developing solutions based on the consultations. In process time, it relates to the articulation of a particular way of thinking that is based on Aboriginal values and norms. "Healing" and "wellness" are distilled through the particular filter of "self-determination" as part of the broad vision.

#### **Self-determination**

As the Strategy is designed, a clarification occurs with respect to its concrete destination. While not directly linked to formal self-government negotiations, the Strategy is being developed under that ethos. At this moment, the Strategy is delinked explicitly from any language of self-government to avoid political obstacles. A careful distinction between "self-government" and

"self-determination" is made. A senior government official comments on the wisdom of positioning the exercise this way:

*One thing I found very interesting from a policy development point of view was that everybody steered away from calling that a self-government negotiation which I think was brilliant, because people wanted to be very practical, they wanted to see an end to this (i.e. violence) and see some results and there are so many so-called self government negotiations that are being bogged down by the rhetoric and the politics behind the notion of self government. I think they were very smart to basically talk about Aboriginal control and transfer of program and services into the Aboriginal community and shy away from calling that self-government. As far as I'm concerned it's on the spectrum leading to that, but it was a good move because people didn't get sort of wrapped up into a great debate about what self-government meant, where it should be, how it should be. It was very focused and I think it was very smooth.*

Self-determination becomes meaningful as a social term. Rooted in Aboriginal cultural values and beliefs, the Strategy contains a vision of community-based development. Aboriginal participants address the importance of clarifying the purpose and direction of development. One prominent Aboriginal leader addressed this issue in the form of advice: is the initiative simply aimed at better service delivery or is it directed towards an Aboriginal system of social and health services under Aboriginal control?

*And I guess in terms of advising another group is what is the agenda, is it taking a look at improving the status and health for Aboriginal people in your province and maybe creating that kind of forum to do that is quite appropriate. Or do you have a long broader term agenda of looking at the broader perspective of self-determination. Would that change the working relationship if that was? When I look at what's happening many of them view themselves as sovereign nations within a sovereign nation. We also (need to) take a look at the cross relationships, the different nations in Ontario because they say ultimately we could have potentially broader groups. And I guess in terms of the issue of what would be the most appropriate lines between organizations at this time, is you'd have a different re-drawing of the lines if you have a government nation's perspective than a service delivery model because we can then group them the way the governments do, either by districts, or by north, south, or by departments,*

*or by ministries.*

*And I guess in terms of the thinking around recommendations for other groups, is this a long term solution to where you want to go and do you view this as a stepping stone, or is it a block building process where you take a look at, someday this becomes a domain of your government, whatever that means. Or is it very much a service delivery framework, for which there is no intent to go beyond that, that you're trying to improve the quality of service that Aboriginal people get. So, my advice would be, is, what do you want to get out of it, do you want to improve service delivery or is there a broader range.*

The Family Healing Strategy explicitly adopts a phased-in approach to Aboriginal control. The Aboriginal Health Policy while seemingly about better access and improved services is itself part of a strategy to advance the broader direction of health care under Aboriginal control. A member of the government caucus recounts:

*The Aboriginal Health Policy was seen as the open door, as a door that would open an acceptance of developing a broad range of programmes and services not specifically spelled out in the implementation agreement, not spelled out in the AHP fiscal breakdown when it was completed, but a broad range of strategies like AIDS, like long-term care, like mental health, like structural reforms that would facilitate Aboriginal takeovers of hospitals, traditional needs, a whole, diabetes, a range of things, some of which the work was started on already, some of which the work would later start on. But AHP was seen as a wedge in some ways. If you can get the buy in to at least the concept of a separate Aboriginal Health Policy, you bring with it separate Aboriginal Health Authorities, you then establish the means by which, over a period of time, you can begin transferring programming from DHCs to Aboriginal Health Authorities. And in fact, it was an incredibly exciting time, because we thought that we could get AHP through and move towards the creation of Aboriginal Health Authorities, this would be a very broad transformation in the way Aboriginal Health was delivered in the province. And it was seen as the enabler, AHP was the enabler.*

In the context of "self-determination", both initiatives are designed as comprehensive, multi-generational solutions required for long-term structural change.

## **FROM VISION TO KNOWLEDGE**

Vision defined as "healing" and "wellness" implies certain knowledge and understandings; understandings which come from the consultation process, from the Aboriginal participants and from traditional teachings and perspectives.

### **KNOWLEDGE**

#### **Moment: Conceiving new solutions based on old knowledge**

In the course of the development of AHWS, the term "healing" is explicitly connected to the initiative on family violence whereas "wellness" comes to be identified with the Aboriginal health policy. The two terms "healing" and "wellness" are linked together as "healing and wellness" when both initiatives are merged into one strategy. While technically the two terms refer to different initiatives, they are closely related in conceptual terms. In reprising the understanding of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Nose (1998) refers to the meaning of both terms:

Healing is described in Aboriginal terms as referring to personal and societal recovery from the lasting effects of oppression and systemic racism experienced over generations. Whole health is said to be achieved when the deep causes of Aboriginal ill health have been remedied by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working together.

Whole Health encompasses the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual dimensions of the person and harmonious relations with social and environmental systems that are themselves functioning in a balanced way (RCAP, Vol. 3, 1996: 317). (p. 14)

In this context, "healing" and "wellness" can be seen as two dynamic aspects of a process aimed

at realizing a post-colonial condition. Such a condition includes self-government and economic self-reliance (RCAP 1996d: 109) as part of the means of arriving at balanced social well-being. Thus, both terms encompass social and political meanings that go beyond conventional Western medical or therapeutic ways of interpreting the same words. Ideally, because of their close inter-relationship they should be discussed together. However, for analytical purposes, I will discuss them separately here.

### **"Healing"**

As noted in Chapter Five with respect to the development of the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy, several shifts occur to arrive at the vision of "healing". It begins to unfold from the ONWA report where the issue is first articulated as one of "family violence". When taken up by the provincial government, the Ontario Womens Directorate constructs the issue at first, as "wife assault". However, by the time the Joint Steering Committee is formed, "family violence", as understood in Aboriginal contexts, is the undisputed focus. A politician reflects on the tension between white feminist and Aboriginal perspectives on the issue of violence and the shift that was required in the internal thinking of the Directorate at that time:

*One of the difficulties, I think, with the Directorate, is that their focus is supposed to be only on women. I know all through the time we were in government, I kept saying to them, you know, you have to understand that the focus needs to be women, children and the vulnerable...To a certain extent, the argument that it's not within their mandate is true. When you have a government though, in power, that first of all is very empathetic to the mandate, but is saying that in order to accomplish what we want to accomplish for women, we need to take into account that often their situations and the issues are similar for children and the vulnerable, and we really need to expand that.*

*And quite frankly, I still believe that the Women's Directorate has a hard time*

*with that. I still believe that they - I don't think all of them - but I think they have spent more than ten years focused on the one area, and the real political concern for them is that if you get defocused, all the attention will go to the other groups and women will no longer have the focus that they need.*

*Now, it may be under a hostile government that in fact survival instincts are helped by a better unified position, but it's been my strong view that it was and is a conundrum. And it's a conundrum for a Minister to say that "Well, in my judgement you're going to weaken the women's cause if you can't see it within the context that's being presented by various communities. The Aboriginal community was not the only one that was coming to the Women's Directorate and saying you're not speaking to our issues. Black women had come and said we have to look at women's issues within the context of a very beleaguered people. You can't just say to Black women, call the police, because their experience with the police and with Corrections is very different than white women's experience. That's been very hard for a lot of people to hear, that the analysis needs to be broadened, and we need to learn from women, from their actual experience, how that analysis can speak to women who are doubly disadvantaged, triply disadvantaged, and that has been a big issue. And I think that there's been breakthroughs for a lot of people working in the Directorate, but it still is a problem because it's not included in the official mandate, as this new government would say, the core business.*

### **From Violence to Healing**

A second significant shift in thinking occurs when the Elders encourage participants to direct their attention towards "healing" as the positive, constructive solution to the issue of violence. As a result, the JSC changes its name to reflect this understanding of the vision. The shift in focus from violence to healing allows for a much more comprehensive understanding of the issues involved as well as what is required to effect change.

As reflected in the RCAP description, "healing" refers to the multiple, negative social impacts of colonization. As an Aboriginal discourse in the 1990s, healing is associated with a wide range of issues including substance abuse, suicide, and sexual abuse and family violence. Family violence itself is a broad term used to describe many forms of abuse, including physical,



mental, verbal, and sexual abuse of certain groups such as women, children and Elders within the family (Dion Stout 1996: 9-10). Emotional abuse, spiritual abuse, and economic abuse or exploitation and neglect feature in other understandings (Manotsaywin Nanotoojig 1990: 9-10). Community abuse, understood as a "situation where a tribal community rejects a member or family, for a variety of reasons", is yet another dimension cited (Manyfingers 1993). While often viewed and treated as distinctly separate phenomena in the mainstream, in the Aboriginal context these are understood as related and part and parcel of the same phenomenon - the devastating social impacts left in the wake of colonization. Further, as a direct result of the historical forces of colonization, these forms of violence are understood to be the effects of "internalized" oppression on the basis that they were not part of traditional Aboriginal societies (Daily 1988; Frank 1992; Oates 1992).<sup>1</sup> Using the example of the impacts of the residential school system, York (1990) relates how these forms of abuse are problems which are transmitted from generation to generation like an inherited disease (p. 38). For these reasons, healing is often described as peeling away the layers of negative impacts to arrive again at a core identity - "who I am" as a person and "who we are" as a people.

### **Healing as "recovery from" and "becoming"**

The metaphor of "peeling away the layers to arrive at a core identity" is particularly apt. Described in this way, healing is quintessentially understood as "a process" (Krawll 1994). As such, there are two dynamics involved: the dimension of healing as "recovery from" on individual and social levels, expressed as the need to break the generational cycles and impacts of various forms of social violence *and* secondly, a dimension of "becoming" which in traditional

spirituality is expressed as people becoming all that the Creator intended, each with their own purpose and path in life.

### **The Wholistic Paradigm**

In the literature and in the AHWS consultation process, the most common term used to describe both the effects of violence and the form of healing required is "wholistic". In the lives of people, effects are felt as a whole and experienced on multiple levels, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. "Wholistic" in this context means that effects cannot be treated in isolation from one another and that healing must incorporate all these dimensions of being.

Similarly, in working from a wholistic construct the impacts of these forms of abuse affect not only individuals, but also have consequences for families, communities and the nation. Here again, it must be remembered that the policies of colonization were intended to destroy not only the identity of individuals but Aboriginal cultures and societies as a whole through assimilation. Thus, healing must work on both the individual and social levels to be effective. For this reason, it is not sufficient in the Aboriginal context to send someone away for treatment when the family or community involved has not begun to heal. From this perspective, because "wholistic" means that individuals stand in relation to and not in isolation from one another, it makes sense to articulate healing as a process of community development.

### **Healing as Community Development**

In her national study on the role of healing in Aboriginal communities Krawll (1994) links "healing" with "community development":

Community development is organization for action. It is a process whereby people learn how to help themselves. In theory, community development is a process which is driven by any community involved in taking action when a problem or concern is identified. The first benefit of community development is what happens to people as they work together in solving their own problems.

For individuals in a community engaged in this process of community development, healing naturally occurs. In building a common language between cultures, the terms or concept used to form a definition or strategy for community development can become synonymous with the concept of healing as defined or described by Aboriginal communities (p. 27).

This spirit of coalescing and working together as a community to foster healing is captured in the words of one Aboriginal AHWS participant:

*I think it was the feeling of it's about time Native people worked together, all across Ontario, that working together as Native people, almost like a mini self-government that they were working on, and because it was always a feeling of saying Native people need to look after their own people, and Native people are able to say how they need to help more people. And I think that was the feeling of the heart and the mind working together to look at the wholistic -- physical, mental, emotional and spiritual -- healing for their own people. And I know that was what was really pulling them together at that time, understanding that, you know.*

*And they've said it for so many, many years that only I know what I feel and only I know what my sister, my Native brother or sister is feeling because we have been through it and it's different, where a non-Native person may go through it a different way, they may go through family violence but it's not the same as a Native person going through family violence because there is racism, there are derogatory remarks, there's discrimination, prejudice. There's so many different things together along with the family violence that they go through that it's different. And for a non-Native person to say, "I can empathize with you, I know what you're going through", I don't believe that. And this was the one time that Aboriginal people fought together and said, yes, we work together, we know how our people are suffering because we have suffered through it, and it was mind and heart together in balance to work towards that healing process, and they were all gung ho to do it and that was the feeling at that time.*

Krawll states that a community development approach to healing is directed at the underlying causes and is not limited to a focus on symptoms (p. 26). Drawing on the consultation

process, the Joint Steering Committee reflects this understanding when it provides the following orientation with respect to how family violence should be interpreted within an Aboriginal context. The committee states that family violence "refers not to isolated, separate incidents of abuse, but rather to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of Aboriginal individuals, families, extended families, communities and nations (AFHJSC 1993:10). Building on an inclusive definition of family violence and its multiple impacts on individual and social levels, the Joint Steering Committee further directs that the Strategy be focused on the concepts of healing and wellness, "rather than merely responding to incidents of violence" (AFHJSC 1993:11).

In the following discussion on AHWS' orientation towards healing, an Aboriginal participant identifies "wholistic" with "global" to capture the dimension of community and the long-term, positive orientation that the term "healing" conveys:

*R: Compared to others I guess the focus is primarily on healing, whereas with other different areas, different agencies, they look more at violence. They look at the negative part of it, very strictly with statistics and using vital statistics of suicides and family violence whereas with family healing they look at primarily, specifically at healing -- how can we heal our communities? And as Native people they tend to look at it wholistically in terms of healing for the whole family, not just specifically or segmenting. Their thinking is more global in terms of healing the population and it was nice to see the global. And that's the difference I think that I have noticed even having left the Strategy and being out in the community, that's what I have noticed, even within the agencies that I have been in contact with in the areas, the communities.*

*I: Do you recall how that shift occurred?*

*R: It began when the elders became involved and the elders being elders think ahead at the generations to come and when you look at violence you see that as an elder, that the healing needs to take place and to look at, not to concentrate on the negative but think ahead on the positive, and that's how the elders looked at that, healing versus violence. You have to think positive, in what direction we*

*are going for the next generations and what we're planning for the next generations. I believe that's, if I sincerely look back on it, that's all that happened, it changed from family violence to family healing.*

## **The Challenge of Wholism**

Wholism presents a very different logic than the partiality and specialization of mainstream logics. A senior government administrator recalls the challenge involved:

*Another piece that was very different, and it's part of the conceptualization, but it's real hard for people working in government to deal with this, is the integratedness of everything, where from a healing and wellness perspective you had to see the relationships in that sort of circular way among everything. We are talking social services, health, education, etc., etc., corrections, justice issues, all of them are a part and parcel of the whole. Well, that's easier for me even to see conceptually than it is to do something about in practical policy and pragmatic terms. And so that is also a difference because we're used to, in government, carving things into sort of, they can be pretty big chunks, but they're chunks nonetheless. Whereas healing and wellness was the antithesis of chunks of anything.*

In a very particular way, the logic of wholism challenges the fragmentation and hierarchical control endemic to bureaucracy. As a Western thinker, I view the problem not as a lack of knowledge on our part but rather our approach to knowledge. Working from a vision of wholism would imply radical structural change. Two government participants speaking from different perspectives assess the negative and positive aspects of this implication:

*R1: I think taking that type of philosophical base and trying to sell it in the system, I think ends up being scary from an administrative perspective. Because it forces organizations to look at things differently than what they look at. They look at them in boxes or matrixes rather than in circles and inter-relatedness, like everyone's got their piece of turf and then you go on from here. And it's difficult I think for ministries to think about the interchangeable nature of doing business, of looking at the person as a whole, saying, "Okay, here are the person's needs and some you might get from MCSS and some you might get from Sol-Gen and something else you might get from Health." And I think we've talked about it in government but we certainly haven't come real close to achieving that kind of*

*ideal. I mean there's a whole other seven-eighths of the iceberg that's out there that go to make up that one particular area. I think it's scary because of the way government is organized and you look at thousands and that kind of thing within programming rather than looking at needs and being able to pull them together. And you're beginning to pull different parts of organizations and ministries together and you're looking at a whole different way of organization and structure.*

*R2: Impact on government in this process. Well, it certainly had changed the way government was going to do business, and to do business not just with Aboriginal communities but I think the way they were going to do business for probably all other communities. But as a result of going through this exercise, I think if we had continued with the last government, that the changes would have been radical right across many service sectors, and it would have been only in some core areas to begin with but I think eventually it could have, you know, would have carried through and had a substantial impact. Whether that's going to play out within this particular regime or not I can't predict.*

*...What I was picking up is, I was having ADMs saying to me, this is the way we should be doing business for all our communities, this is what we want to do.*

*I: Meaning?*

*R2: Meaning we need to do away with mandates. You know, our mandates are inappropriately scoped, that we divide children's programmes all over the map, that we can't have children's and adults' programmes together, that we can't have, shape our programmes differently in different communities. But still, somehow address, you know, accountability and responsibility. All those kinds of, we need to do away with a lot of the bureaucratic and administrative environments that we've built in order to run some of our services. You know, a child welfare agency has to have x number of staff, child care has to have x number of staff or x number of kids, you know, that kind of stuff.*

*So there was like, there was a consistency between NDP visions of how services should be provided and what was coming forward from the Strategy, and I think many of them saw this as "Eureka, we've got something we can now use to influence the rest of what we do." And that would have begun to play out in a way that there were elements within the larger mainstream community that would have embraced it wholeheartedly, and then the rest of the mainstream communities that wouldn't have embraced it would have been caught in a pincer between the two. And you know, it was a moment in social history and evolution that could have gone in that direction, I think.*

## **The Role of Women in Healing**

As noted above, constructing violence as a women's issue is problematic in the Aboriginal community. As an issue that concerns families and often whole communities, constructing the problem in this broader framework also avoids internal divisions that could harm the fabric of communities. One senior government respondent recalls:

*I mean the Chiefs were very resistant, because they were afraid it would divide communities even further if you talked from strictly a woman's point of view, or even strictly a children's point of view. And some of the older Chiefs and some of the elders were very eloquent about how unless you hear through the whole community, all you will be doing is in fact, I can remember one of the elders saying it's like cutting a sheep out from a herd. I ended up agreeing that unless you put this within the context of what, it may be a bit extreme, but what I would certainly call cultural genocide if not actual genocide, that it wouldn't speak to those people.*

Articulating the issue as "family violence", however, is not intended to diminish the particular ways that women are harmed and abused through multiple forms of violence. Aboriginal women have worked hard to expose the issue in their communities and indeed, it was their action that led to the genesis of AHWS. However, by approaching the issue as a family and community concern and by articulating it in the context of healing, women were assuming and asserting their positive traditional role in Aboriginal community life. A member of the Aboriginal caucus talks about the internal education process that this approach required:

*Well, in the beginning there was all this reluctance of the chiefs to be involved...it was very difficult to bring them in and there was a couple of women who I think did a marvellous job at bringing back the information to their communities after meeting in Toronto. They would sit in on the meetings and then they would go back to their reserves, their communities and give the information to their chiefs and council, informing them that we have to work together because finally they recognized that these reserve people are moving to the urban areas and they're their people too. They are a part of their communities, even if they live in the city, in Toronto or Thunder Bay or wherever, Sudbury or Sault Ste. Marie, you know,*

*they're still from the reserve. So they are family, they're part of the First Nation, they're Native, they're First Nations people, it doesn't matter where they're from because they are Natives.*

*And I think when they slowly began to look at that and that they could also use the funding in their communities to start that healing process because when we began, it was almost educational too. We were doing some educating in the process in terms of family violence that, when I was working on the family violence issues in the late 80s, there was the implication that shelters in the city were enticing the women from the reserves to come into the city and removing the women from the reserves. That was the impression and so one of the things we were saying was that if you have safe homes in your reserve you would be taking care of the women and children in their communities, then they wouldn't have to leave their communities. And I think that was part of the educating that was being done by the women.*

*Also men are starting to recognize that women, in traditional things, women are the soul, the first teachers, the first, the givers of life; whether male or female, everybody comes from a woman, so that you have to respect that. So there was a lot of teaching, almost educating, about that in the process.*

Thus, understanding "healing" in the context of wholism presented different challenges to the Aboriginal communities and to the government ministries involved. It also provided a unique challenge in the context of the two groups working together to develop a strategy.

### **The Struggle of Two Logics**

The joint struggle to develop an actual strategy is viewed differently by both groups.

From an Aboriginal perspective, the struggle in joint meetings was to engender an understanding of "healing" from a distinct cultural viewpoint. One Aboriginal participant offers the following reflection:

*I think of that whole year of developing the strategy, much was learned by the participants, both inside and outside of government. And I think one of the, at least the concept of healing certainly took on a whole new meaning, the concept*



*of holistic healing had to be understood. And that was built into the whole strategy so that also is unique about how the strategy eventually became a reality. As an example, one of the twelve recommendations in the Breaking Free Report was of healing lodges, and that was innovative in the sense that yes, there were women's crisis shelters where healing was already taking place which also was an excellent strategy, but in ours it was introducing the concept of healing lodges. And whenever we met with government to ask, to find out or not, whenever we met with government to discuss healing lodges, the first question was "Well, what is a healing lodge", and it demonstrated the opposite, not the opposite, but different thinking patterns. And that their immediate response, or not response but expectation for a response, was a building with a this and a that, you know, a number of counsellors and blah, blah.*

*Our concept was a healing lodge is yourself, you begin with yourself and that's how we're taught in our own ways, that our body is a lodge, a spirit, and we have to heal our spirit. So when we started bringing that concept into it, it was difficult for bureaucrats to understand that kind of concept in terms of translating it into policy and action that could be taken. Eventually, after the concept was understood that a healing lodge could be you, it could be a group of people, it could be a community, it could be a building, it could be a this, a that, once we got over those kinds of difficulties and built common understandings, I think what I liked was the end results that the growing and the interaction that came as a result of the understanding of where Aboriginal people were coming from. So that caused us to make sure that the structure could be responsive to us.*

From the perspective of the government caucus, the challenge for the joint committee following the consultation was how to develop a strategy that honours multiple issues with multiple dimensions and to do so in a way that is not prescriptive or does not become a formula. As related in the introduction to this dissertation, an intense struggle in the group ensued because some knew only segmented logic while others only knew wholism and when positioned this way they were essentially incompatible approaches. The issue was resolved by letting go of one logic, namely the segmented logic, and by following the Aboriginal logic of integrative knowledge. As stated in Chapter Five, this breakthrough is named as the movement from "words to circles" by one of the Aboriginal representatives:

*What happened there was we were struggling with words put to a vision and gave up, and just went with the vision and began to draw it in circles.*

This shift in mindset brought forth some key teachings based on the Medicine Wheel and the Life Cycle, which in turn brought people back to origins and particularly, the Creator's vision as understood from Aboriginal perspectives. In Chapter Five, I depicted the "healing continuum" and other particular features of the design of the Strategy that unfolded as a result of this breakthrough.

In summary, the significance of this moment is two-fold. First, the breakthrough resulted in the creation of a new wheel or new knowledge, which is to say old knowledge applied to new problems. This old knowledge in new form was incorporated directly into the final report. Second, this moment of breakthrough occurred in two small working groups in two different places at the same time, indicating the "right timing" of the vision of healing coming into being. Both in its content and in the way in which it came forth, the transformative power of Aboriginal knowledge was revealed.

### **"Wellness"**

The language of the Aboriginal Health Policy is more functional than visionary. It focuses on "gaps" in health service and "barriers" to health access. The process is also more task-oriented as "policy" is seen to be more focused and directed than is a "strategy". Nonetheless, culture-based understandings of health and wellness are present in the policy and converge with evolving Western thinking about health determinants. Moreover, the cultural-based conceptual thinking developed during the family healing process influences the health process in ways that help to

articulate the meaning of wellness, thus providing an incipient wholistic conceptual coherence to the overall Strategy when the two initiatives are later merged. Building on the previous discussion of healing, I will focus on the notions of "health" and "wellness" and some basic features of wellness as a part of the culture-based paradigm which is at the core of the AHWS vision.

As stated earlier, the definition of health as "whole" and encompassing "the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual dimensions of the person and harmonious relations with social and environmental systems that are themselves functioning in a balanced way" provides a particular orientation for understanding the meaning of "wellness" from Aboriginal perspectives (RCAP 1996d: 317). As a framework, wholism transcends the conventional Western distinctions, for example, between mental and physical health. An Aboriginal leader offers the following reflection on how wholistic ways of thinking about health fit Aboriginal objectives in the health policy planning process:

*And I think a lot of people began to take a look at what did they mean by the word wholistic, and the word wholistic meant you can do the whole spectrum of healing and prevention, to treatment, to active care, and again bringing a person through that whole cycle. So taking total control of that whole spectrum of healing meant that the strategy had to address that whole cycle. And to have First Nations move in a greater responsibility in treatment. I think there's something that's been lacking. In those communities that have done their homework in terms of saying, well what do we need, wouldn't it be great if we had doctors who didn't rely on OHIP billing for their practice, who could spend more time on our clients, or nurse practitioners. We need to take a look at the seriously mental ill in our communities, but then also looking at our traditional approaches to dealing with people who are mentally ill. Moving people away from hospitals as an institution or psychiatric hospitals as an institution, keeping them more in the communities and having it dealt with there. Or the emerging problems that may occur as a result of AIDS or diabetes or some of those things that have a great impact on Aboriginal communities.*

*So in terms of the strategy itself, there was a lot of hope that much of that gap would be met through the strategy, and I think in terms of the aspirations for self-determination, Health authorities and of course funding the Aboriginal Health Policy to go along with what that means would also be necessary. So for us it was a natural progression of things in terms of taking a look at our strategic health areas throughout the territory, setting up a Health Commission that took a look at the health authority aspect or health planning specifically, and now wanting to bring on board those people, like project planners or research evaluators, begin to look at tracking whether we are in fact making an impact on health, developing information sharing, and all of those. So every aspect of this strategy fit into sort of the broader objectives of Indian control over Indian health, of bringing Aboriginal services as close to the community as possible, co-operation in terms of health planning, and again, beginning to address the allocation of resources.*

In terms of conceptual thinking, O'Neil (1993a) cites the term "social health", first used in the work of Feather (1991), "as a way of integrating ideas about health drawn from family and community medicine, mental health, and Aboriginal ideas about holistic health and the medicine wheel" (n.1, p.45). Working from this framework, wellness is addressed in relation to all aspects of being and rather than being viewed as an end state in itself, wellness is conceived within the dynamic interplay of all forces present at a given moment. In this respect, wellness is determined primarily through self-assessment. One of the Elders who worked with the Aboriginal Health Policy initiative provides the following understanding from a particular cultural perspective:

*I guess we're coming into our time. What was done was a joint committee to sit down and think about the policies or work on the policy, an alternative rather than what it was before because I don't think we would have taken that route. So in a roundabout way, I think the government kind of realized that it's not working, so how can we make it work? And maybe you can say we're back to that teaching again; we need some of your people to come and sit in on it with us, and maybe finally begin to really understand who we are, you know. And I think that that's where I looked at it, that this was a beginning...*

*There's another meaning to health, you know, there's another meaning to wellness. And that's what we've always been working on. And you know from the Native perspective I think we're at a time in our life where, when I talk about*

*environment is that I think a lot of people will look at, what do I see, what do I see around me, what do I see within my family, what do I see on the land, what do I see in the trees, the birds and the lakes and the rivers, what do I see. I always tell people, I say, you need to go back the other way too, you need to internalize and take a look at how are you, are you well, are you sleeping well, are you thinking well, you know, do you feel good about yourself, do you feel good about your family. You've got to go back to that too because if you don't feel well inside, then it doesn't matter how much (physical health) you have, it works both ways. And so we're at that stage where in our language we say, "scuna goga", which means "how are you in this life?" It's not exactly how you feel, you know. Are you in balance?*

*I: Not exactly how are you doing today!*

*R: Yeah. It means more than that. And so we're just now having the opportunity I guess to speak to that and to address that. I think we need to collectively re-examine ourselves as to how we are, you know. When we hear on the news, on the TV, in the newspapers, the killings in some place, in another part of the world -- senseless, senseless killings. And yet it's happening right in our neighbourhoods, right in our communities, you know, and yet we're going to say we're well? Everything is alright? Man, are we ever in denial if we say that. You know, the country is sick, you know, our politicians are sick because they don't see it, they don't want to see it. They say, well we'll build more prisons and a bigger police force. That isn't the answer. Sorry, that's not the answer. The answer is to go back to ourselves and back to our family unit, back to that family structure which we always maintained and struggled to maintain as much as we can, you know.*

## **The Wellness Paradigm**

When "wellness" is conceived of as a paradigm, several features stand out even in relation to those notions of "health" considered to be more inclusive. In relation to the individual, Rogers (n.d.) identifies the following characteristics:

Wellness is an integrated and holistic approach in the way individuals live their lives. There are four directions to wellness: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. None of the dimensions function independently, but are interrelated and dependent upon each other.

Wellness is a continually evolving process. The question is not "Am I well?" but, "How well am I now?"

Wellness is also a positive pro-active approach to a healthy life style change. It is more than just the absence of disease or even of good health, it is maximizing individual potential in each of the four dimensions.

Wellness is a response and dependent on the individual's potential for personal growth.

Wellness as balance and as a way of living life stands in sharp contrast to the predominant Western scientific medical model which is more narrowly and negatively focused on illness. Defined by O'Neil (1993b) as the illness care system and by Proctor (1993) as the causation paradigm, it originated in the germ theory of disease and in the belief that cures for eradicating infectious diseases could be found through scientific discovery (Proctor 1993:50). Health in this view is the absence of disease and "curing" disease is the focus of health.

The difference in these two worldviews points to substantive epistemological and philosophical issues which, from a Western frame of reference, boils down to a question of science versus faith. Waldram, Herring and Kue Young (1995) characterize the difference between the two approaches:

*Aboriginal medicine is based on tradition, which is to say that, as a medical system, it accepts that the medicines, techniques and knowledge of the past were effective because they have been time-tested, and in many instances, shared with humans by the Creator...There is also a great degree of individualism and idiosyncrasy in the practice of traditional medicine. Current users are less concerned with questions of efficacy, because of their faith or belief that traditional medicine works. In contrast, biomedicine is empirical and positivist, based on a philosophy of scepticism. Something must be proven to work before it is accepted, and the method by which such proof is attained is carefully scrutinized...The philosophical underpinnings of science render it unlikely to accept traditional medical traditions which are not verifiable through the scientific method. Science is rigid, and hence it will either demand that Aboriginal medicine be examined scientifically or else reject it as faith - inherently unscientific (p. 214-215).*

While not all Western practitioners hold to this view in such an unyielding manner, O'Neil (1993a) maintains that Canada remains nonetheless "one of the few countries in the world where

medical pluralism is not a taken-for-granted aspect of everyday life" (p.37). Yet some trends in Canadian health policy indicate that the mainstream is moving more towards that direction. While current debates focus on maintaining the present health care system, health promotion, as distinct from the curative, treatment approach and health determinants, more broadly understood in a social, economic and environmental context now constitute part of the policy discussion. In this context, the struggle to develop an Aboriginal-specific health policy based on an appreciation and respect for traditional medicine and notions of wellness can be seen as ground-breaking. A government participant offers the following comment:

*Because the Ministry of Health has tended to, and I think still very much does, has a cultural assumption about what health is which is very Anglo, I mean it's a white Protestant conception of what health is. And that's probably not a popular thing to say but it is a narrow conception, and it denies it has it, the assumption that it has a universal model for health that should fit all. So for those people who were more involved in more grassroots community health planning and had been forced in the way in which they were setting up culturally specific services, to deal with some of the questions that the Family Healing Joint Steering Committee was dealing with, there was more of an openness.*

### **The Good Life**

Both "healing" and "wellness" speak to and partake of the larger vision of "the good life" as expressed in Aboriginal teachings. While all societies have their own philosophy of what constitutes the "good life", unlike Western visions, Aboriginal visions are not utopian; they articulate the new challenges to be met at each stage of life cycle, and the new responsibilities that attend each phase of life. While healing and wellness are grounded in certain values and beliefs, it is the perspective of the good life that provides the orientation for living those values. In my view Oates (1992) captures the essence of that orientation when he states that "rather than

thinking of life as a "state" of being, life is thought of as a *process* that people go through, their behaviour changing with time and experience" (p. 3, emphasis added). As explored through the concepts of healing and wellness, this developmental approach is at the heart of the AHWS Strategy.

## **FROM KNOWLEDGE TO MOTIVATION**

Aboriginal cultural beliefs provided the substance of the Strategy and an alternative to dominant frameworks that have not worked for the Aboriginal community. Alternatives that work is a key motivation that will be examined next. Aboriginal norms and values also affected participants' motivations as the process moved along, creating a certain commitment to the process as a whole.

### **MOTIVATION**

#### **Moment: Sustaining participation**

On the macro level, as the Strategy and Policy come into being in concrete terms, a certain clarification occurs. Government accepts in principle "the cultural approach" on the basis of a shared pragmatism to develop solutions that work. The intentionality of the Aboriginal vision becomes clearer as the design proceeds: a distinction between self-determination and self-government is made that removes some potential obstacles. And as a guiding principle, self-determination means not just improved service delivery but a vision of the creation of Aboriginal social and health services under Aboriginal control.

On the micro level, there is a perceived lack of balance in the joint process due to the inability of government to provide leadership. However, government members become able to



participate more effectively through the small group process by which the work is now developed. A values-centred approach creates a dynamic which sustains participation and reinforces commitment to the group itself. Solidarity with the collective process is built through relationships which emerge.

### **Do what works**

Both Aboriginal and government representatives share a commitment to develop "ways that work" that will improve the quality of the lives of Aboriginal people in the province. This shared pragmatism, expressed in a joint search for ways that do work, provides the basis for government accepting a "cultural approach" to addressing solutions.

On the part of the government this necessitated a recognition that their approaches have not worked. One senior administrator comments:

*Because you see, the way we've been doing it previously doesn't work. I mean I don't think that dealing with the Aboriginal community in the context of self-government and the context of history and so forth, that you can say, "Well, we're just going to keep doing it the same way. It just seems to me patently that it doesn't work for all kinds of reasons. So that means you have to do something else.*

This recognition in turn necessitated an alternative approach which government itself could not develop because on its own it could not "understand" from an Aboriginal frame of reference. It is my view that this vision necessarily had to come from the Aboriginal community. To do otherwise would be to repeat some version of past mistakes. An Aboriginal leader comments:

*So although we take a look at say family violence and child sexual abuse and the suicides that were happening, and we see them all as being an impact on Aboriginal peoples' inability to cope in terms of today's society. And the fact that there is this dysfunction, whether it's individuals or communities, I think in terms*

*of looking at ways of dealing with how to deal with dysfunction, maybe an Aboriginal approach could begin to solve those problems. Certainly trying the traditional methods for a lot of communities has failed, has not worked as well. But I think maybe it was sort of the timing of a lot of things because we were looking at exclusive legislation for Child and Family Services or looking at an Aboriginal Health Policy that spoke to traditional healers and those kinds of things. It was probably an opportune time to sort of take advantage of what was being viewed out there as a pendulum swinging to the right in terms of different approaches. Now that it's starting to swing back the other way with this government, I don't know if there is such an openness to those kinds of approaches.*

From the perspective of the Aboriginal caucus, the motivation "to do it ourselves" was based on a kind of freedom that said "we can't do worse than they have done".

### **Unbalanced responsibility**

While AHWS is founded on Aboriginal cultural principles and approaches, a concern also exists that the process should have been more "balanced" with government contributing more of its innate abilities to the process. In the words of one Aboriginal participant, the conditions for synergy between the caucuses existed at this moment: the Aboriginal caucus was contributing spiritual and emotional energy while the government participants could have used more of their physical and mental capacities in policy-making to help develop and move the Strategy along.

My own view is that there was not a sufficiently comprehensive "understanding" on the part of the government caucus to do so at this point, in part because epistemologically, it is very difficult to work with two different and at times, conflicting ways of knowing. Further, acculturation as a complex form of experiential learning requires an immersion and absorption in the cultural context that was beyond the scope of the exercise despite every effort by the

Aboriginal caucus to provide that context and despite efforts on the part of non-Aboriginal participants to learn. Part of the evidence for this lies in the fact that the Aboriginal co-chair was invited to address several Cabinet level committees to explain the cultural approach being adopted. If there had been a sufficiently indepth understanding inside the government caucus, this may not have been necessary. While these meetings were intended to sell the Strategy to the politicians they also played a crucial educational role that enabled the politicians to "get it" in a far more comprehensive manner than was possible through the bureaucracy.

What does emerge from this moment, however, is a small core group of people composed of members of both caucuses who were willing and able to work biculturally and thus, who could move back and forth more easily between cultures. As a result, some of the vacuum in terms of internal leadership within the government caucus begins to dissipate at this point. This has significant consequences that will be discussed in terms of action.

### **Engendering commitment through collectivity**

One of the unusual features of AHWS as a policy-making initiative is the sustained commitment of its participants which endured over a period of years and for some members long into the implementation phase. As one among several participants noted:

*It was really quite remarkable when you track through meeting minutes, who was there throughout all of the meetings or most of the meetings. There was incredible continuity, more so there than I have certainly seen say in other committees, for a long period of time. You might get it for a year or something, like eighteen months, but not always over a five year period.*

Continuity was extremely important in such a developmental and process-oriented exercise. It raises the issue of what facilitated such a sustained commitment. In earlier rounds, we looked at

political and personal motivation; now we address the nature of the group process.

A culture-based, values-oriented approach to developing the Strategy helped to engender a commitment to the group process. Individual responsibility stood in relation to the group, not in isolation from it. Thus, the Joint Steering Committee as a "group" generated its own momentum and motivation to sustain participation. In the words of one Aboriginal participant "the group was bigger than any of the individuals or organizations involved":

*I think in both instances for the Aboriginal Health Policy and the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy and now the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy, those people who tried to usurp either one of those processes are no longer a part of any of those processes. The processes, I believe, were bigger than any of the individuals, PTOs included, or government ministry included. I think that the individuals that came to the processes that were there to usurp power or control are no longer in the process. They did not last long from any of the organizations or the ministries because the process took over, and the process became a life of its own and has a life.*

*I come from an adult training background, you know and I believe in group dynamics, that the process is bigger than the individual and if it's truly run by principles before personalities, it will show. People who have big personalities and big egos who want lots of power and control, who don't trust the group, who don't trust the process are not going to last long in that process. And so looking now at all three of those or the JSC, those people who are problematic in terms of the group process are no longer in the process. They are replaced or they just don't come. It has a bad impact in terms of their organization or their ministry. In terms of those new people that come in who try that kind of stuff, either they get shaped up by the group, the group takes care or they leave. So I believe in the group and I believe in the process. And it's working.*

Several ministry participants discuss how they "were stretched to do more" as a result of the strong commitment to the group. A government participant comments:

*...I attribute that to the strength of the people that worked on the effort who were consistent and devoted. I mean there were times when obviously you've got more on your plate than that to work on. And everyone's issue is important. I mean you could deal with seven, eight different issues. But this one always was there and you had to juggle it and some issues went and some issues came but this one*

*remained constant. And I think that's a real strength again of the whole process.*

*I think what makes the difference is the people who are committed to the task. First, the commitment and secondly, the people you know around the table, it's a personal commitment to them and the amount of time and energy that they devote to the task, and again that comes through interest and commitment as well. I mean you have to identify that as a priority and then you work along. I mean if you've got five things to do in one day or four things and this is one of them, how do you decide which job gets done first? It can either be that your phone's ringing off the hook from the minister's office or that you're saying I promised to get this work done for this group and here's the deadline, so I better get this done and juggle projects around, right?*

Another government representative talks about of importance of accountability to the group in sustaining communication and cohesiveness:

*I think the accountability to the group which we tried to maintain so that when we worked in small groups in between meetings or the interim steering committee, whatever, all the decisions that were made had to come back to the table, and be accounted for. Like nobody went off and did things on their own. And that's really important in a process like that because if anybody starts doing stuff on their own without clearing it with the group, it's really, really destructive, even if it's the right thing to do because again, the communication is too difficult to make sure that everybody understands what was done and why it was done if it isn't brought back to the table.*

Lastly, an Aboriginal participant comments on the self-responsibility that people assumed as part of the group process:

*Everybody was self driven, it wasn't as if there was a directed leadership of what's happening and what we needed to do and all that kind of thing. Every single person who was with that group was, as far as I can remember, focused on this to the exclusion of all else in their life.*

### **Political self-interest threatens collectivity**

As reflected in comments by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants, one of the tensions which inhibited this commitment occurred when politics impinged on the group

seemingly from without or when self-interest entered the process from within. A government representative states:

*R: I think the times when there were problems were when things got too political or some people had not, for whatever reason, been at the table, been in a meeting when they should have been at a meeting, or there was some confusion about who was attending on whose behalf, and then the information doesn't flow well enough, and I think that can pose some problems. I'm being a bit vague because I'm getting into stuff I can't say too much about. But it's when I think there were key decisions being made at the political level because then it becomes not just a policy exercise, it becomes a political exercise.*

*I: When you say the political level, are you meaning within government or within the Aboriginal leadership?*

*R: Both. Because what tended to happen is that the processes were following in parallel, so that there were certain key moments when decisions were being made at a more political level and there wasn't really, I guess the Joint Steering Committee had a limited ability to do anything about either of those sets of processes. Because I mean we were essentially staff, from either the Aboriginal organizations or the government organizations, and our job was really to develop the policy options. And so that's what we did.*

An Aboriginal representative expresses similar concerns about the process running into problems when it becomes too political. This is attributed in part to the dynamics between on and off reserve groups; it is also a matter of working together in a principled manner for a common vision:

*I think the majority of people, well, I think there was a core group of people who were absolutely dedicated to the entire process and there were those who sat on committees or who went to the Joint Steering meetings and really tried to take things apart in a very negative way, not in a constructive way...*

*Because this leadership effort was done off reserve, I think that's where some of the difficulties arise. If it had been a more co-operative process between off reserve and on reserve in the very beginning then people on reserve could have owned it as much as the off reserve. Then we would have been thinking much more in line with one another. So I mean I think that is an issue...*

*I'm concerned about the whole process and that there was too much emphasis on politics as opposed to principles and guidelines. It really cut with communities that I think were more progressive and were really committed to the overall approach of the strategy and committed to the betterment of Aboriginal people throughout the province. That to me is the bottom line.*

The Elders and the Aboriginal co-chair played key roles in helping the group to maintain its focus on the broader purpose and intentions of the process and to not be taken off course by political issues and interests. An Aboriginal participant comments:

*And the elders, they're the ones that reinforced for me that the value system that I carried was the right one, that if we were to be the representatives from the community then those were the values that we had to keep at the table. I mean there were times when, I don't think I ever felt that I had to sacrifice my personal values or my heritage or those values those teachings, but I think some days I felt if we did it this way, it might go faster. I learned a lot about patience, I learned a lot about, we all learned a lot about patience.*

Operating through a values-oriented approach in a consistent manner provided a certain protection of the collective process against forces that could have threatened it. One of my own theories about why this collective process worked well in the midst of such diverse social, cultural and political interests is that these dynamics are fundamental to women-centred processes and both initiatives were designed and developed largely by women.

### **Small groups facilitate participation**

At this moment in the process a shift occurs in the way that the work of the joint committee proceeds; small mixed working groups become the form by which the Family Healing Strategy is developed. Caucuses and the JSC are no longer the central driving forces and for a number of participants this provides relief from the sometimes difficult dynamics of working as a large group. Small working groups facilitate closer, less formal working relationships which has

the effect of enabling people to participate more freely and easily. Again, it is my view that this proved to be an effective strategy because this mode of working is more typical of the way many women prefer to work i.e. small informal groups. Four Aboriginal participants, three of whom are women, comment on the positive aspects of this experience from their various perspectives:

*R1: By the time we went into working groups people were so willing to go into committees you didn't have to twist arms. Everybody was gung-ho now to work and get down to the nitty gritty. "We've put up the skeleton, now let's get the meat on the skeleton." Everybody was very willing, everybody worked together. I mean all the committees that I've been in. Everybody worked very well.*

*R2: When we got to caucus and to the sub-committees and working groups we certainly took that value of respect with us. When we had disagreements, we tried to find consensus. When we couldn't find consensus we let things brew a little bit. We asked people to go and get other advice then bring it back and you know then we'll talk about it again. Like we never just threw things off the table or we never ganged up on anybody, like if something couldn't be resolved we went through a problem solving process, we went through again where did our mandates that put us at the table and what were those needs that kept us there.*

*R3: The fact that there are sub-committees working on developmental projects allows people to be trained in very technical work, that would be brought back to the Joint Steering Committee. So you're probably seeing a lot of people getting extra training on the sub-committees, but it's not even looked at as training it's just a by-product of doing our job. Because the group is so big you can set up sub-committees. Because the sub-committees exist, essentially you got a lot of free labour to do a lot of developmental work that you wouldn't normally get or you would have to contract out to expensive consultants, another aspect of the point of developing our own evaluations.*

*R4: The sub-committee work was actually very good at building relationships and seeing that there was certainly if we were going to walk this path, then we had to walk it with people who we didn't always know well, that we could still do it and we could still do the teaching, the learning. I certainly kept myself open to not making judgements on people, not being too forceful or opinionated. I mean there were times when you sort of had to do your own personality check in a committee and see whether or not you were just having a bad day or it was just really the*



*wrong way to go. So in some ways there was an opportunity to do some intuitive stuff, to say okay as an individual in a committee level how do I work with this committee and make it function? I don't think we ever had to kick anybody out of a committee because we couldn't not work it through.*

Similarly, women participants from the government caucus also viewed the smaller working groups as a strength:

*R1: And we also were divided throughout the whole process at times when there was work to be done into work groups, into smaller work groups. And to stay as part of the whole large group of twenty-four or twenty-six or however many people there were around the table, which sometimes can be a unmanageable number. Those small work groups do help and to help to provide focus and you know I think that's another real strength. I think it's implementation of good group process. I think that's important.*

*R2: Subcommittees and working groups, the more I worked with people, the better I felt they worked, for the most part, because of the interpersonal relations with people and the trust that got built up. That's all I keep coming back to is really that...And just the individual, like going on subcommittee with people who might have looked askance at each other across the big table, when they got down and started wordsmithing or trying to come up with ideas and it wasn't head to head, but rather more contributory stuff happening that I think went a long way. So, just getting to know the people and them getting to know me. So in a way it had to be a personal process.*

## **FROM MOTIVATION TO ACTION**

Developing a strategy based on Aboriginal understandings of "healing" and "wellness" was a breakthrough and a high point in the process. Aboriginal knowledge, values and norms were integrated in what became a creative venture based largely on small group work. In the process, motivations as intentions became clearer as issues became more concrete; consensus on these issues was translated into elements of the overall design (e.g. long-term, community-based, generational, a phased approach to Aboriginal control). Momentum was generated as the Strategy came into being. Commitment to the group as a whole was sustained by maintaining a values-

centred approach and protecting this approach from political interests which could sideline it. The process was moving towards a final product.

## **ACTION**

### **Moment: translating the reports**

As outcomes of the process, both the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy and the Aboriginal Health Policy are produced. A central issue which emerges at this stage is how to "translate" or communicate the contents of the reports in ways that bureaucrats, senior officials and politicians could relate to, understand and support. Each of the two initiatives deals with this issue in a different manner.

#### **Translating the Aboriginal Health Policy report**

The Health Policy working group decides to hold a second retreat and to do a second round of consultation regarding implementation issues. Part of the rationale for doing a second retreat is to familiarize Ministry officials with the document and solicit buy-in. Ministry representatives also hold a series of forums inside the ministry to garner understanding and support. "Translating" the document is not as difficult a task because much of the document is formulated in a way that is already accessible to bureaucrats. Rather, it is the vision itself and the thinking behind the vision which needs to be sold to other departments of the Ministry. Thus, an internal communication process, involving some members of the Aboriginal caucus as educators, proves to be an effective strategy.

## **Translating the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy report**

A different set of issues emerges with the Aboriginal Family Healing report. The report is written with concepts and language that is more accessible to the Aboriginal community. Given different cultural approaches to issues, it is not surprising that "translating" one cultural approach into a language and way that another culture can understand becomes problematic.

As noted earlier, oral presentation to politicians of the conceptual thinking guiding the Strategy had occurred continuously throughout the process. The responsibility now lay in the hands of the ministry representatives to translate the learning from the process into terms that their colleagues could understand. This was accomplished with more and less success. A successful example indicates that bureaucrats could understand when the work of translation was undertaken. A government representative tells the following story:

*The putting together of Family Healing in terms of the final report of the Joint Steering Committee. It was quite interesting taking through the document internally and circulating it within branches. To ministries that are used to short, crisp, briefing note style modes of communication, or even when they have long documentation it's usually wrapped up in a form of legalese and an internal jargon that makes sense to ministry folk. The Joint Steering Committee's report of Family Healing was neither fish nor fowl as far as they were concerned. Most people were extremely confused as to what this was. Some people just looked at the bottom line figures which were \$230 odd million, and choked. Other people really just didn't understand what it was. So a big part of getting some buy in for Family Healing internal to the ministry was setting up a number of forums internally where we would go and walk people through what was in the document, and walk people through what was relevant for (identifies ministry), how this fit into a broader agenda.*

*And it was surprising. I think for many people it was the first time they had ever seen anything utilizing the wheels as a way of explaining things. You know, government works with boxes, government works with columns, it does not work with wheels, and concentric wheels were even more confusing! But there was a real job of translation that had to go on, and I think that's the best term, is translating the things that people who had sat at the table, what communities had*

*told the people who had gone out and done the consultations, and what had been articulated in language that made sense to the people who were on the Joint Steering Committee, and it made sense to the people in the communities, which is the main part, translating that into a language which would be understood in the ministry without losing the original meaning of the document. So it was a real job of trying to straddle two worlds, yet at the same time you had to convince the ministry-types in order to pass go and move on to the next stage of approval.*

*So we found ourselves drawing on comparisons of, look, this is what the World Health Organization says about health, for example, and everyone goes, "Oh yeah," and nodded. But it was a way into them to explain, look, holistic health is not something to be scared of, the concept of healing is not so alien as you might imagine. And by the time you get into explaining the Medicine Wheel, and concepts of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health, and walking people through the healing continuum, this is what the healing continuum means, this is what the life cycle means, this is how you put them together. And actually beginning to do some of that translation work, it was really interesting to see people who were sceptical begin to come on side, and because you were putting it in language which they could understand.*

*I mean for some people, there was the assumption and never said as much but the sense you got from some people in the ministry was, well if they can't put a report together that's really clear, how are they going to run \$200 million worth of programming? I mean, there was that response, but there was also, some people had the sense that this is a really important document. We might not understand it all, but it really does mark something we've not seen before, and something important.*

*And it was an incredibly interesting process to see people's minds come around and especially working with people who have worked, and this is not to compare First Nations with other communities, but who have worked with immigrant/refugee communities who may articulate (issues), depending on people's cultural background, in a way which is not familiar to the ministry, it was far easier to see those people move that step because there wasn't the assumption it should be written in language I understand. There was the assumption I've got to make a leap to see what is being articulated on the page and that was really important. And I think without that translation work, Family Healing could have got bogged down because there were negative comments that came back to it. People would nitpick. People would focus on, oh my god look what it says on page 27. And the language, in some areas the language in the document isn't clear, and for a ministry that officially prides itself on precision and legalese and legal documents and acts and policies that shape everything, to be faced with non-precision is quite a challenging, it's challenging, it's messy, it*

*doesn't fit into categories. So that's one stage.*

This moment reveals the importance of the core group of individuals who, as mentioned earlier, could function sufficiently in a bicultural manner that they were able to mediate understandings at crucial points in the process. In addition to facilitating cross-cultural learning, their work also reinforced the importance of biculturalism itself in a plural and diverse world.

#### **MOVING INTO THE FOURTH CYCLE:**

As we enter the fourth go around the circle, both initiatives have already been approved by the Aboriginal leadership. They arrive at the same time for approval by the Ontario government. In relation to the Medicine Wheel this is the time of "action" and so the fourth cycle begins there and not in the east with "vision". It is notable that in Medicine Wheel terms "action" sits in the "north". In terms of the colours of humanity, "north" is also the location of the white peoples who are associated strongly with "movement" (Dumont 1993; Dockstator 1993). In contrast, Aboriginal peoples are located in the "east" where "vision" sits. In relation to policy-making, it is the Aboriginal vision that has guided the process thus far. Now it is time for movement and so we begin in the north.

However, in addition to this *starting point of change*, there is another observation to be made with respect to *the direction of change*. The Medicine Wheel as I have been using it thus far flows clockwise. As the government takes these two initiatives inside its own system for approvals, Western logic and priorities take over. A crucial turning point in the movement of the whole process occurs when the government decides that it cannot support both initiatives and makes that decision in a unilateral manner apart from the joint process. This movement in reality

is described visually in this analysis as moving counterclockwise. As one government representative observed, there is a deep sense of the joint process unravelling from this point on, driven more by action than by vision. Thus, the direction of change flows more naturally counterclockwise.

# FOURTH GO AROUND THE CIRCLE

“moving backwards / going forward”

## ACTION

**“Deciding unilaterally”**

decision by government not to support both initiatives

joint process unravels

negative chain reaction



## MOTIVATION

**“Colliding interests”**

government’s motives

Aboriginal resistance



## KNOWLEDGE

**“Excluding partnership”**

disrespect for the joint process

the option of integration

## BACK TO ACTION

**“Designing implementation”**

negative dynamics

AHWS is implemented



## VISION

**“Integrating the two initiatives”**

government develops an integrated framework



## **FOURTH GO AROUND THE CIRCLE**

**"moving backwards/going forward"**

### **ACTION**

**Moment: Deciding unilaterally**

#### **Decision by government to not support two initiatives**

As introduced above, this cycle begins with the "action" taken by the Ontario government not to support both initiatives. Instead, the government decides that either one of the initiatives will have to be dropped or both will have to be integrated into one strategy. Making this decision without formal consultation of the JSC causes a chain reaction of negative effects with respect to the joint process and the Aboriginal caucus.

### **FROM ACTION TO MOTIVATION**

This decision created a crisis for the whole process and we naturally want to ask "why?" and to examine the reasons for it and the motivations which were operating at this moment.

### **MOTIVATION**

**Moment: "colliding interests"**

#### **The government's motives**

The primary motivating factor for the government's action is fiscal restraint; ministers state that they cannot afford to fund both the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy and the Aboriginal Health Policy initiative. However, other motives are also involved. The government is



in the last phase of its mandate and is in pre-election mode. As noted in Chapter Five, from their reading of the public environment, the politicians believe that there would not be sufficient public support or tolerance for two Aboriginal-specific initiatives. However, the government is motivated to support one initiative but determines that there is a very short window of opportunity of two or three months to have one approved. From the perspective of senior politicians in Cabinet, waiting longer would risk the possibility of getting nothing which in their view would be considered "tragic". One politician states:

*And you see what our concern was, quite frankly, was that we knew we were coming to the end of the mandate, we knew how tight the money was, and we wanted the money out. And, I mean, if we'd taken another year, it would never have happened, and we knew that, we knew that. We certainly didn't trust either of the other two parties to carry it through. Neither has any commitment to Aboriginal affairs, quite bluntly, and we thought if we could get this out and get this happening, at least there would be some lasting thing there. And if we won again, then we'd be that much further ahead. But it really was, that was our time because we knew from experience, we'd had this experience initially, if we didn't have it done by June, we would have had to have called an election by a year the September, the money wouldn't have got out far enough to have the effect. So that's really part of what we were doing.*

Thus, several inter-related motivations, financial and political considerations being uppermost, coupled with a perceived lack of time, converge to provoke a crisis. These motivations define the parameters of what senior politicians believe is possible.

### **Aboriginal resistance**

Both the decision itself and the way in which it was undertaken generated resistance on the part of the Aboriginal leadership and caucus. Both initiatives had already been approved as separate by the Aboriginal leadership. As separate initiatives, the Aboriginal organizations felt

there would be more money to deal more effectively with the tremendous social needs that had been identified and acknowledged throughout the process. Therefore, they resist choosing between the two initiatives.

In addition to the decision itself, Aboriginal leaders and the Aboriginal caucus resist the way in which the decision was made. Unilateral decision-making without formal consultation of the Aboriginal organizations undermines the transparency required to sustain confidence in a joint process. An Aboriginal representative who saw merit in the idea of merging the two initiatives, states nonetheless

*...there were other organizations that were just cheesed right off. Not because the end result was going to be better coordination but because of how the process was done. There was no time for organizational consultations. That was what we were told. I think they could have taken some time to bring in some people and say here is how it's going to go down in government. But because of cabinet and whatever happened in that process, there was some fast dancing that had to be done. And as a government rep, I might have done the same thing saying, "Well, we can risk it blowing up in our faces by taking it out to the Aboriginal organizations and getting it stalled, and we know it's that close to being lost or just ram it through and have very little consultation, open dialogue or consultation." Because there was informal consultation. That did happen. But it wasn't transparent, it wasn't up front and that's what most of the other organizations were pissed off about.*

An Aboriginal leader notes that as a result of the way the process was mismanaged several Aboriginal organizations almost withdrew altogether:

*I guess all along it was being tabled as two separate processes, two separate initiatives, and when the government made the announcement without any forewarning that they were putting these two together and just sort of going ahead with the announcement, you would say well, if this is supposed to be a joint process then why didn't you tell us beforehand, why didn't you tell us while we were meeting to sort of discuss this because there was still a lot of feeling that these were two separate processes, and you know, you made your own decision to put them together. And I guess in terms of the co-operation that we thought we were getting with the province in terms of First Nations and the Statement of*

*Political Relationship, we thought we would have at least had that rapport. And (name) was the minister responsible and did not sort of make those overtures, came back asked us to sort of be involved in terms of the government's announcement, but not be privy to that being the way it was going. Some of the line ministries were left flabbergasted with Native response to the issue, you know, be glad you've got this thing. And so some of the organizations almost dropped out...(names prominent Aboriginal Chief) was taking exception to the process and aired that at a Joint Steering Committee level. And so we were looking at the big guns that were sort of being brought out to sort of deal with the issue.*

## **FROM MOTIVATION TO KNOWLEDGE:**

From this point on the process proceeds on the government's terms and in doing so, effectively derails the joint process. An inability on the government's part to share power at this stage leads to an inability to develop a shared solution. Confronted with this decision, the Aboriginal organizations and the bureaucrats must decide which option to proceed with.

## **KNOWLEDGE**

### **Moment: "excluding partnership"**

#### **Disrespect for the joint process**

The inability of the government to respect the norm established for the joint process that problems and issues should be brought back to the joint table makes it very difficult to resolve the situation by means of a joint process. Conversations circulated between politicians and the government caucus and informal conversations occurred with Aboriginal leaders but as stated above there was no formal communication with the JSC or with the Aboriginal caucus. In hindsight, several senior government officials recognize this issue to varying degrees:

*R1: My own sense was that the merger process was bad but that the outcome was appropriate in terms of putting things together that should belong together. Perhaps reducing the amount of resources that would actually be put into infrastructure...I mean I do see why the process was problematic...from the Aboriginal point of view they were sort of handed a fait accompli: "If you want this to happen, you've got to take the whole thing like this, guys." That's it's not Family Healing anymore, it's Family Healing and Wellness, you know...so then I understand why that would have been a problem for people to swallow in process terms and maybe even conceptually, I'm not sure. But in terms of actually making it live and have a critical mass, then I would say it was the right thing to do.*

*R2: And you see our problem was, and I need to be really blunt about this, our problem was we had no mechanism for doing that because cabinet documents have to be made secretly. We couldn't get anywhere with cabinet office, explaining to them that it had to be that way... For example, negotiating with unions. So a very interesting kind of argument, but completely away from the people who are actually doing the work. I mean I understand the frustration of the Aboriginal groups, I truly do. We just didn't have a mechanism, and I think one of the things we have to be thinking about for when the opportunity comes along is how to prevent that kind of thing from happening again, because you know, we'll get there again. And it's hard to imagine. Yes, we retreated into our silo, if you like.*

*R3:...And I think we introduced some efficiencies, some economies of scale and some synergy by bringing the two initiatives together. It happened very quickly and if the Aboriginal community felt that it wasn't consulted properly, it wasn't brought along, it's a fair criticism. Because you get into the policy approval system and you know there was a window to sell this thing and it was quite clear that the only way it was going to wash was that if it was brought together and I think senior people in the government should take some responsibility for that.*

These and other similar statements by government representatives indicate significant ambiguity with regard to their actions. Operating within their own self-defined constraints creates a tension between process and outcome whereby the means are sacrificed to achieve the end product. Aboriginal resistance helps to expose this tension as an internal contradiction; its effects (dishonesty and lack of trust and transparency) undermine the relationship necessary to sustain a joint process and to arrive at a joint solution. At a deep level, this false dichotomy between

process and outcome reveals a classic conflict between Aboriginal and Western ways of knowing and acting which in turn helps to explain why so many partnerships fail. Once self-interest is allowed to undermine joint interest through the government's adoption of the pragmatic route, the underlying ambivalence does not disappear. The ethics and politics of developing a combined strategy that will retain a sense of integrity simply becomes that much more difficult for both the Aboriginal and government caucuses.

In this context, the weakness of the lack of leadership at the senior level in the bureaucracy which had persisted throughout the process becomes most strongly evident here. Internally some members of the government caucus take responsibility to call a meeting of the two joint groups who had worked on both initiatives. The focus of the meeting was to decide which option should be pursued. Placed in a very difficult position, the group decides that it is not possible to choose one initiative over the other and the group focuses on the idea of integration. However, some Aboriginal representatives prefer to take their chances by leaving the two initiatives on the table as they were originally developed.

### **The option of integration**

There is some indication from some Aboriginal representatives that conceptually the two initiatives are linked in terms of a wholistic approach; linking the two terms as "healing and wellness" expresses this view. On this basis the potential for an integrated strategy exists, however, given the brief timeframe no opportunity is given to actually develop an integrated strategy in a joint manner. In this way, the Aboriginal caucus is effectively excluded from the process of amalgamating the two initiatives.

## **FROM KNOWLEDGE TO VISION**

In line with this thinking, integrating the two strategies conceptually is viewed by government as positive. However, "integration" requires more than putting two documents together and calling them one thing, which is what occurred. Because the joint process is no longer functioning formally, bureaucrats were left to do the integration and to do so in a very short period of time. Vision requires "integrative thinking". It requires a re-examination of the vision itself and this process did not occur.

### **VISION**

#### **Moment: integrating the two initiatives**

##### **Government develops an integrated framework**

While one implication of the government's decision to amalgamate the two initiatives was effectively to exclude the involvement of Aboriginal caucus, a further implication was that the task of developing an integrated framework was left to several members of the government caucus. As people who had been involved intensely at the joint table for several years, they felt the contradictions acutely. One representative discusses the "complete double bind" the government's action had put them in:

*I mean it was a difficult time for everyone. I felt very strange about it. On the one hand, in order to get something done you don't follow political process, but the cost of following the political process would have been the loss of the Strategy and it's a complete double bind, and what do you do? There were fights over it. What was ethical? Was it ethical to allow the strategies, both strategies to collapse and nothing to ever happen? And nothing to basically happen because you knew information about the cabinet, the timing of the cabinet, the priorities of*

*the cabinet, and knew that if you waited you would not get on. Or, did you make a decision that was in some ways to follow a unilateral approach which was the antithesis of everything that had gone before then in order that some of the concepts and some of the pieces of policy, especially AHP, in terms of the doors that had opened for policy could go forward and then build on what you got on the other side?*

*So the approach to putting them together was really an incredibly painful exercise and in putting them together there was, really, it was back to the drawing board. It was undoing what had gone before. Undoing arguments that we made internally months before justifying them being separate, we know had to go back and eat crow in committee meeting after committee meeting, making presentations on how they made sense together. And this was an extremely horrible, very difficult period, to go back after having put your heart and soul in defending why they're separate, thinking you can win both of them, that you can get both through, you now go back knowing that you've, if not formally gone against process, are doing something for expediency, which had you allowed the political process to play itself out, may have not been agreed to.*

Committed to the process and determined to do what they could, these government representatives attempted to develop an integrated framework based on the principles and conceptual thinking that were embodied in both initiatives. One representative discusses the approach they adopted to try to maintain the integrity of both initiatives:

*...There are major discussions about healing and wellness that are still going on between Health and MCSS and OWD about "It's there in the AHP, but what's the relative weight of violence?". And this is a way in which some of the narrow lines creep back in, in that it's now what's the relative weight of violence, of health, and of a broader concept of healing. And linked to that is AHP under AFH -- is it a subcomponent which Health had always argued or is it a separate stand alone piece? And in the end, because the organizations had always worked on them as distinct, we took the perspective that all that Healing and Wellness would be was an introduction. Basically there are two strategies that exist, they're separate and they're called Family Healing and the Aboriginal Health Policy. And the materials that went forward talk about the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy as two distinct components.*

*So rather than rewrite or attempt to interpret again what communities had already said or integrate it conceptually, there was a small conceptual piece written which talked about holistic health. It drew on the language that was in*

*both the Aboriginal Health Policy and the Family Healing Strategy, and talked about where there were strategic linkages, where there were obvious connections between the two. But it didn't attempt to create a new framework or a new philosophy. The idea was we have one cabinet slot, only we have two pieces we want to go forward with, so we do it as an envelope. All we do is we create a hollow envelope and we get the two pieces through in the hollow envelope, and the hollow envelope is to not take away from the uniqueness of both. So we use one cabinet slot to get two documents through. And that's where Healing and Wellness comes from, how we used one vehicle to pull two cars. And in pulling them together, that brings the two documents forward.*

In addition to developing an integrated framework, they also had to develop an integrated budget.

At this point, some earlier key issues which either had not been discussed or remained unresolved came to the surface. The original budgets had been put forward on the basis of the needs of each Aboriginal organization, a long-held practice in terms of government funding practices. However, there had been no discussion up front about "what if you don't get everything". Furthermore, those involved felt that the "old style of doing business with government" on an organization to organization basis "didn't conceptually feel wholistic, it didn't feel like the way the Strategy feels when you read it". It represented an ethical dilemma on both personal and political grounds:

*There were junctures at which very difficult decisions needed to be made, it wasn't like you were working as a technical functionary. It was extremely personal as well because all the time there was an ethical dimension to a decision that was made. That was a really testing time, I mean the period at which the combination was taking place, the period at which the merger was taking place, that was an incredibly difficult time in terms of thinking, are we doing the right thing? Is this not just replicating unilateral decision making that women have been trying to break away from? And are we, in order to proceed with some funding, duplicating Indian Act mentality in the way in which we're carrying on this work? And that was a real dilemma, a real dilemma.*

To resolve these tensions, the representatives opted to conceive of the budget as a whole. Doing so also meant acknowledging that some groups had been left out and needed to be included,



particularly the Metis. Two representatives describe the process of constructing the budget and offer their assessment of the results:

*R1: The key principles of the Family Healing Strategy would be carried over so that the framework will be flexible. That communities could buy in at the stage at which they were ready to buy in, that they could buy into a component that would meet community readiness, and that's where things like grants and community annualized are really important because some communities want to be doing things in addition to the worker that they get from the PTO because the PTO is put in the budget. They want workshops to go along with that, and you know, that is one of the greatest things about sitting on the Strategy is that you go through those grants process, you go through the training process, and you see the level of change in the nature of submissions that has taken place over three calls...*

*R2: It's not axe this and axe that. It's keep every component, try and build in as much flexibility as possible. And keep the diversity in terms of the range of things that are done. So the shelters, the lodges, the residential treatment centres -- all the key areas that are recommended in the priorities are there in the Strategy.*

*Some of the second stage priorities aren't there. In the second stage there was several hundred million dollars in housing that was there, which is important. None of that comes forward, you know. Your Phase One which is far more limited than what it would take to have a comprehensive, I mean a genuinely comprehensive approach to healing. If you look in the stuff that is there, in terms of infrastructure, even from a narrow health perspective, there isn't the stuff in the form of water, sewers, housing, heavy infrastructure that could have been there, even if only on a small scale. So that it is missing and I think it does lose something by having Phase One priorities. At the same time, I actually think the organizations over-estimated how quickly they could implement the volume of programmes that are there...*

In the end, what was presented to the Aboriginal organizations was a proposed budget with the understanding that if there were major areas of disagreement, and the Aboriginal organizations could come to an understanding among themselves, the Aboriginal caucus could decide to re-allocate funding within any of the budget lines, except where money was tied to specific items in some instances. For example, funding for community health access centres was tied to community health centres. However, much of the budget had a high degree of flexibility built

into it which was unprecedented from the government's perspective:

*You could do a hell of a lot of different things with them. And that is actually unlike anything else that has been passed since or before it. The degree of flexibility in what the project could be and what level or scope there was for design at the community level of a programme, and design at PTO level of a programme is quite staggering. I mean, I don't think there's many other examples of where so much has been passed, so much money's been passed for Aboriginal programming without a tight definition of exactly what's going to be done. And without tight stipulations about when it's got to be spent, what we came in with was a breakdown and said to the PTOs, you can, if there is consensus, if agreement can be reached amongst the organizations this funding could be re-allocated to priorities that were identified in Family Healing and the AHP, and can be identified as priorities that weren't identified, where they can be re-allocated subject to agreement being achieved.*

In this way, the budget was to be presented as a working document that would involve discussion and negotiation by the Aboriginal caucus.

## **FROM VISION TO ACTION**

Once the integrated framework and budget were completed, one issue remained before the documents could be resubmitted to the Ontario Cabinet for approval before the end of the legislative session: which ministry would co-lead with an Aboriginal chair during the development of the implementation phase and which ministry would co-lead during the actual implementation. After much internal debate and jostling among ministries, two different ministries assumed responsibility for those phases. On this basis, the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy was finally approved.

## **BACK TO ACTION**

### **Moment: designing implementation**

#### **Negative dynamics**

The impact of the government's actions in terms of the process and in particular not taking formal responsibility for disrespecting the joint process and asserting power unilaterally affected the dynamics of "partnership" and "dialogue" at the new JSC. Members of the former Aboriginal caucus felt hurt and betrayed. Because the government had not acknowledged its responsibility for the problems it caused, internal blame was directed at some members resulting in difficult and painful dynamics inside the Aboriginal caucus.

Once the Strategy was approved, the membership of the Aboriginal caucus changed. This is in part a response to the above dynamics and also because implementation itself constituted a new process. With implementation being negotiated the Aboriginal leadership became more directly involved.

While the task of designing implementation moved forward, the dynamics of the process continued to move backwards in terms of a joint approach: government approves, government presents the framework and budget and then changes to the plan are negotiated within the guidelines established by government. With money now on the table, the Aboriginal organizations also reverted to competitive dynamics to ensure that each got their fair share.

Implementation is designed on the basis of a joint process, retaining features of the earlier process such as co-chairs, caucuses, consensus and the guidance of Elders. A mechanism to resolve disputes is also created and some new members are added to the Aboriginal caucus. While it is a long time before trust is rebuilt and good working relations are once again

established, moving through the negative dynamics did enable the process to go forward.

## **ENDNOTES**

1. Unlike many Aboriginal authors, LaRocque (1993) adopts a different perspective on the issue of violence against women in pre-contact Aboriginal societies. She states:

There are indications of violence against women in Aboriginal societies prior to European contact. Many early European observations as well as original Indian legends (e.g., Wehsehkehcha stories) point to the pre-existence of male violence against women. It should not be assumed that matriarchies necessarily prevented men from exhibiting oppressive behaviour toward women. There were individuals who acted against the best ideals of their cultures. Even today, all the emphasis on Mother Earth has not translated into full equality and safety of women.

There is little question, however, that European invasion exacerbated whatever the extent, nature or potential violence there was in original cultures. Neither is there much question that Aboriginal men have internalized white male devaluations of women. As one scholar observes:

Deprived of their ancestral roles...men began to move into areas that had previously been the province of women, adopting some of the white attitudes toward women and treating them as inferiors rather than equals (Dexter Fisher, 1980:13). (p. 75)

## **EPILOGUE**

Given that AHWS is now in its seventh year of implementation it would be inappropriate to draw "conclusions" because the AHWS story is far from over. However, some further reflection on AHWS as a case study of partnership is warranted. As we have seen through both tellings of the story in Part 2 of this dissertation, partnership in this instance is multi-dimensional: AHWS consists of a partnership among Aboriginal organizations, a partnership among government ministries and a partnership with Aboriginal organizations in Ontario and ministries of the provincial government. The sheer complexity of the dynamics involved in these multiple relationships would present at best serious challenges to the possibility of sustaining a successful partnership. Yet considered overall, most participants, at the time and since then, view AHWS as a successful example of partnership.

In relation to the purposes of this dissertation outlined in the Introduction, the AHWS case is highly instructive with regard to how partnership and dialogue can function across relations of difference in a constructive manner. Particularly informative is the fact that the AHWS story reveals both the constructive and destructive dynamics that can affect such partnerships. In examining the deeper structure of AHWS, the first three cycles of the story indicate what is involved in constructing social relations that are more egalitarian, just and emancipatory - relations which can be considered paradigmatic of a post-colonial perspective. In examining the unravelling of relations in the fourth cycle, we learn about those dimensions that can undermine such relations and thus, which prove equally instructive with regard to the purpose of not wanting to repeat "the colonial attitudes of dominance and control over Aboriginal

peoples" (Turpel n.d: 1).

In this epilogue, I wish to discuss the case study in relation to the larger issues posed in the first part of this dissertation and in particular, the dilemma of difference examined in Chapters One to Three. In the current state of negotiation between Aboriginal peoples and governments of Canada, difference in the context of liberalism remains an unresolved philosophical dilemma. Yet as I have proposed, respect for difference with a concomitant ability to share power with Aboriginal peoples would appear to be the required conditions for the kind of partnership and dialogue necessary to create and sustain the post-colonial relations envisioned in Aboriginal terms as co-existence. In the context of this dilemma, I have suggested that Leonard provides us with a potential opening and way forward. Combining modern notions of equality and justice with postmodern critiques of modernity's domination, ethnocentricism, and certainty, Leonard poses the possibility of a dual commitment to difference and to solidarity based on an ethic of interdependent social relations. While no meta-narrative can guarantee social change, nonetheless Leonard believes it is possible to bring about transformed social relations by means of a politics of conversation. Hints rather prescriptions are given in terms of the conduct of such a dialogue. Given the potential this holds for the possibility of re-constructed relations with Aboriginal peoples, what remains is to reflect on Leonard's proposal in light of what we learn from the case study itself. In doing so, I will also incorporate the views of the participants of AHWS and draw particularly on the advice they gave in relation to their own learning. Formulated simply as "what works" and "what doesn't work" in relation to partnership, I will focus briefly on learning from what doesn't work and then proceed to a more substantive discussion of learning from what does work, as the less familiar and thus, more illuminating

dimension.

### **Learning from What Doesn't Work**

In the first three cycles of the AHWS story, we witness the development of a partnership between Aboriginal organizations and government that establishes egalitarian relations based on structures of joint power. However, while part of the solution, such formally constituted structures are not sufficient to transform hegemonic social relations with the Ontario government. What is also required is a recognition of difference in substantive terms. In other words, a respect for difference that includes recognition, acceptance and the ability to draw on difference as a strength. The first three cycles reveal the struggle to embrace and understand difference in its multiple forms and what that understanding can accomplish in relation to developing an effective strategy for facilitating social well-being in Aboriginal communities. In observing the deep structure of the process, we watch how "joint" power is transformed into "shared" power. In the last cycle, however, this process breaks down. Unilateral decision-making on the part of government shatters the ethic of interdependence which underlies the respect for difference and shared power that has evolved. This action threatens the partnership and the new relations of equality which sustain it; in effect, partnership becomes a contradiction in terms if one partner has power *over* the other.

One way to view this breakdown would be to interpret it as a case of reverting to the colonial dynamics of domination and ethnocentrism: those who hold greater social, political and economic power determine what is best for others. A second possibility on which to construct an explanation is suggested by Leonard. In his discussion of a dual commitment to



difference and solidarity, Leonard (1997) warns that

A politics of solidarity has to be built alongside a politics of difference, but not dominate it. The risk is obvious: we have been here before. The danger of solidarity *appropriating* diversity in the supposed interests of a 'higher good' is an ever-present problem (p.29)...The danger of a triumphant and unreflecting solidarity is that domination and homogenization become a practice legitimated by a discourse on mutual interdependence (p.165).

Viewed through this lens, it can be argued that the government's action was not the liberal act of denying or negating difference in the name of homogenization but rather in striving to act in solidarity with difference the government ended up, in Leonard's words "appropriating" it.

Although perhaps a subtle difference, in my view this second interpretation provides a more accurate explanation of the government's actions. As the government in power, the NDP had taken significant steps publicly on the federal as well as provincial level to support Aboriginal self-government in Canada as one articulation of the respect for Aboriginal difference. In the case of AHWS, the politicians repeatedly argue that their intention in deciding to merge the two initiatives was to achieve an outcome rather than subvert one. The ultimate proof of this intention lies in the result: following their directive, AHWS is approved and is implemented, with substantial funding. However, the lack of awareness on the part of the politicians, even in retrospect, of the impact of their decision and the way in which they made it effectively undermined both the respect for difference and the sharing of power necessary for new relations to emerge. Following Leonard, I view this failure as a case of "a triumphant and unreflecting solidarity".

In terms of resolving this kind of problem, Leonard does not identify a particular solution, rather he views the tension of a commitment to difference and to solidarity as an ongoing

dialectic:

**There is a necessary tension, an unresolvable contradiction between moral imperatives which must, with whatever difficulty, be continually balanced against each other. The ethical practice which results from this tension is one which observes continuous vigilance to avoid either imperative obliterating the other (p.165).**

**This tension, evoked by the government's decision, is heard in the voices of the participants themselves; both the Aboriginal representatives and the government bureaucrats are placed in impossible positions. The Aboriginal representatives are forced to choose between the two initiatives; a position which ethically and politically cannot be supported on any grounds. Thus, they tacitly support amalgamation. Government bureaucrats are forced into the equally painful but different position of having to develop an integrated strategy on a unilateral basis. They deal with the issue, not by using this power to create an integrated strategy but rather they attempt to remain in solidarity with both processes; they accomplish this by opting to create one "hollow envelope" to contain both initiatives. Thus, it is in the ethical practice of the participants themselves that balances are found in ways which manage to avoid obliterating the whole process. Backed into the proverbial corner, it is these participants from both sides of the table who make the impossible work, however, not without substantial cost to the partnership and the dialogue itself. It will take several years before trust is re-established in a way that allows for co-equal relations based on difference to function in an efficacious manner.**

### **Learning From What Works**

**In understanding what works in relation to partnership, we start from the same premise of a respect for difference and shared power as conditions which create new relations that in turn**

support a more just, equitable and workable co-existence. In this regard, AHWS can be viewed as a microcosm or a kind of laboratory for understanding how new social relations can be created and sustained. From the concrete advice that respondents gave during interviews, participants in the Research and Review Working Group constructed a summary of learnings as "ideas that constitute the key ingredients of a process which works" and which they considered to be relevant for those embarking on similar joint ventures:

As a departure from the conventional practice of policy development typically exercised by government bureaucrats, the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy represents an example of an alternative approach. We believe that many of the ideas shared here are transferable to other contexts where a number of groups with varying needs and interests seek to work together on an issue of common concern...Some of the key ideas which emerge from this review include:

that all the players and stakeholders concerned are brought together

that participants are mandated with some authority to represent their organization at the table

that there be equal authority and representation among the groups involved

that Elders be involved in all phases of the process

that comprehensive consultations are an essential building block to producing any strategy, plan or policy

that consultations can go far beyond needs assessments and information gathering to actually assist the process of community development and ownership necessary for implementation and change

that the actual planning process, following consultations, utilize and reflect the cultural paradigms of the groups involved

that consensus be used as the preferred method of decision-making and that timeframes be established accordingly

that sufficient time is allowed for ratification and approval by various political leaderships, respecting different decision-making structures

that where problems of approval affect the whole group, the issue is discussed with the whole group and solutions sought in a collaborative manner (Dudziak 1997: 85-86)

This summary of learnings in relation to partnership and dialogue in effect constitute a set of suggested practices based on values that support a cooperative approach. While these ideas reflect "what works", I believe some further commentary would enable us to understand more about "why" and "how" these practices work. Expanding on the insights of the participants, I will focus on several dynamics which help us to learn more from what has worked in this example.

A first set of dynamics concerns the "respect for difference". In the AHWS case study, achieving this respect involved considerable teaching and learning on the part of participants in terms of Aboriginal knowledges, beliefs, norms, values and practices. As part of a continuous learning process, as difference becomes more comprehensible, respect for that difference becomes more evident. The Aboriginal participants need to "convince" less as Aboriginal knowledge and practices become more normative. Respect in this instance goes beyond mere recognition and involves a process of valuing, accepting and working with Aboriginal knowledges and ways of knowing that have formerly been subordinated and marginalized. Based on an increasing knowledge and thus, respect for difference, difference itself becomes constructive. Difference becomes efficacious in terms of the conceptual development of both the healing and wellness initiatives of AHWS and in terms of the principles which by which it will be implemented.

In my view this does not entail an uncritical acceptance of difference, but neither does it involve the kind of deconstruction discussed in Chapters Two and Three that Fraser (1997) acknowledges as potentially detrimental to Aboriginal knowledge and identity. Rather, the open

discussion and practice of difference during the AHWS process provokes a sorting through of difference which helps to bring into relief those value differences worth valuing and those behaviours and practices which hinder the relatedness upon which the work is being developed. Difference provokes a sorting through and challenges both caucuses, for example, to come to terms with the negative aspects of the divisions and territoriality they bring to the table. The sorting through of what constitutes difference exposes these kinds of dynamics as impediments to bringing people to a common goal, without homogenizing or collapsing those self-defined differences which are meaningful. In the following reflections, participants reflect on their experiences of searching for the common in relation to difference in their respective caucuses.

Members of the Aboriginal caucus comment:

*R1: I think that this was probably the first time in the real development of Aboriginal policy in Ontario that on-reserve and off-reserve had to work together...that the provincial territorial organizations were involved, that they had to own their own stuff, that they had to find common ground.*

*R2: To a certain extent, there are differences between the cultures in the room and different Aboriginal organizations and nation and you can see the different inter-personal relation between that. Culture comes to play right there where people have to recognize that there's just not Indians in the room. There are different tribes and different nations and there's different cultures in the room and they have their own clashes. So there's a need to find some common ground and to recognize there's clashes going on and why it's going on.*

*R3: I think they need to come to a common understanding of how they're going to work together before even the policy. I mean what is the outcome going to be for First Nations? Let's get that right off the bat and what is the outcome for our urban membership, let's get that. If it's a collective, then fine...*

Similarly, a government representative remarks that

*... we really ran early on into the kind of territorialism that there is amongst government departments and ministries. Whether it is in the mundane practicality of moving money around to a common pot or the difference in mandates when you*

*are dealing with ministries who have direct service mandates compared to those who have a kind of pushing and nudging from afar, kind of mandate. There would be those differences in approach and differences in philosophies and it took some time to work out a common ground or work out a common understanding of what we meant by consulting, or pooling money. It does mean giving up a certain amount of control and I think historically government departments are not terribly good at that.*

A certain paradox becomes evident: having a common goal focuses thinking not only on what differences are meaningful but also on what constitutes a common ground in the context of a respect for difference. Conversely, in the advice of participants noted earlier, the partnership needs difference to be inclusive; bringing many differences together is a condition that facilitates a true partnership.

However, as we have also seen not everyone participates or commits with equal enthusiasm or investment. The group as a whole can tolerate a fair amount of variation and movement in and out but there is a certain line that cannot be crossed. As participants observe, those who choose not to cooperate, either drop off or are "shaped up" by the group. This appears to happen when the "self-interest" of an individual or an organization or ministry is placed above the importance of the group's interests thereby generating a dynamic of competition rather than the sharing of interests. Those who stay, in effect make the choice to "cooperate", thus making "sharing" and shared rule possible. Cooperation based on a sharing of interests is quite distinct from processes of homogenization based on forced assimilation and predicated on valuing sameness. A key insight arises here: in the colonial paradigm difference is constructed in a binary relation to sameness, whereas the AHWS story reveals an ongoing dialectic and negotiation between difference and cooperation. Difference and cooperation are constructed as mutually dependent. This dialectic is perhaps most evident in moments when difference is threatened by

sameness. For example, threatened with a singular format to carry out consultations, the Aboriginal organizations resist on the basis of different needs, contexts and conditions. What results from this rejection of sameness is a negotiation whereby both a common focus and different approaches to consulting are validated. This breakthrough, acknowledged as "the strength of diversity", represents a key learning on the part of government participants. The process of understanding the implications of difference becomes efficacious as organizations begin to share across difference to meet needs not narrowly defined in terms of their self-interests. It is here that Foucault's notion of power as relational takes on a constructive significance. When power is understood as relational, the dialectic of difference and cooperation can engender a dynamic that is transformative. In the context of discussing transformative moments and offering advice, a number of participants affirm this insight. Several participants reflected on how their identity as Aboriginal people was strengthened through a deeper respect of difference:

*R1: I think one of the greatest lessons I learned was and I tried to teach it to the First Nations people, especially the leadership on reserves, the Chiefs and Councils, that wherever you are you're an Indian, no matter whether you're Cree, Ojibwa, Odawa, you're an Indian. And it's not the status, it's not the card, it's the people, and that's what I learned from it all.*

*R2: The biggest learning that I achieved was no matter if you're First Nations, Metis or even other organizations, be it friendship centres, because that impacts me because I live off reserve too, plus I live on reserve, I've got three residences. Is that we're Hongenewe or Nishnawbec no matter where you go and you see these people, it could be on the rez, it could be downtown Toronto on Yonge St, they look at you and we're all one within one. I guess the positive part would be the ministry people being there too and learning about us as First Nations, or original peoples. And I guess that's about the best feeling that over took me...*

As with the last participant, several others affirmed that sharing the richness of different cultural

traditions among themselves and with government representatives was meaningful in terms of learning across difference:

*It's a great learning experience seeing the generosity, the giving and the sharing of the First Nations people, Aboriginal peoples. That shows your appreciation...The other thing is being accepting of the different practices. Some First Nations go clockwise when they do a circle, others do it the other way. And working out a process - we will go this way this time and next time the other way. And we always did that in the Aboriginal Health Policy and those of us who didn't do those things, we learned from both. And you knew you could practice whatever way you learned and whatever way you preferred, or you could go back to your own practices. But being very respectful of each other, respectful of practices. And I have found with the ministry people they have been very accepting and understanding. They are very willing to participate. How many of them do the smudge, the cleansing with the sage, the cedar. How many of them ever did that before this? That is part of the learning process.*

Sharing difference strengthens identity and solidarity among Aboriginal participants which in turn evokes a sense of nationhood:

*It's brought people together under a common concern and they've had to work out relationships and even funding distributions. But it's also given power to people at the nation level. When people have power they start to express themselves more.*

Sharing difference helps to transform relations with the government participants:

*What was good about it from another perspective was learning more about commonalities that other Aboriginal communities had. In terms of nationhood we may represent a different nation or a language group but in terms of basic human needs and our values for family, for relationships, for preserving our heritage these were all reinforced by the other Aboriginal participants and by the end of the process we realized that we had done our job as teachers because I think we had helped the government representatives understand where we were coming from, from a policy level. So when they started to also be really committed to the process I think that we had done the job that we were supposed to be doing which is helping people understand it from our world and from our experiences.*

If such a respect for difference and the cooperation it can engender is transformative in the social and political spheres, it is because it is also present at a more intimate, inter-personal and



personal level. Two government representatives address the dimension of hope and belief that Leonard identifies as essential to a politics of conversation that recognizes difference and attempts to act in solidarity with it:

*R1: There were many transformative moments...I think they would almost be the same moments or the same occasions when we realized that there really was hope, and that we knew each other well enough to be able to work together and to trust each other as individuals. Not simply as representatives of various organizations, but we were able to joke about some of the difficulties that we had.*

*R2: Well, I think the journey, just working inside of government. I think I became stronger, maybe more confident about what I was trying to do...it was one of these big character building things. They say that the Creator doesn't give you things to handle unless you're capable of handling it; like okay, alright, you can handle this...I think the other thing, personally, I was around elders, or there might be a smudge, or hear the odd teaching or read here and there something. But I think in terms of the last five years, in terms of more appreciation of Aboriginal culture and how that fits, or some of those concepts, how I interpret those in my own life, or things I value that I didn't know I valued...*

The sharing of interests coalesces in a common vision about healing and wellness that taps into a movement that is both spiritual as well as practical. The importance of "right timing" is that it signals a readiness to name issues and deal with them on a community-wide basis. This helps to explain why consensus can work: in a world of difference and cooperation, communication provokes "honesty", exposing a lack of transparency at times which in turn engenders new behaviours based on Aboriginal values. This is also part of what is taught and learnt. In terms of their knowledge and action people are called upon to "stretch". Stretching as a dynamic of dialogue helps to create new knowledge which becomes shared knowledge. In this sense, biculturality helps to overcome ethnocentrism by means of an open, honest and transparent dialogue where everyone is expected to participate and learn. It also creates new space for new knowledge to emerge which is essential if the mistakes of the past are not to be repeated and if

meaningful change is to occur. Furthermore, in the case of AHWS, we can say that difference constructed the Strategy: the framework for both the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy and the Aboriginal Health Policy is based directly on Aboriginal knowledge and values. In terms of partnership and dialogue, these dynamics run counter to the more usual experience of "anti-dialogue" identified in the Introduction to this dissertation:

When efforts are made to find mutually agreeable strategies or solutions, the process is more akin to anti-dialogue than dialogue. The outcome does not usually produce what the people thought they had expressed as wants or needs. This outcome affirms that the process did not result in the creation or recreation of knowledge which characterizes dialogue or reciprocal interaction between two or more parties committed to finding mutually satisfactory answers. Consultations between Indigenous leaders and government officials and Indigenous officials and community people often fail to satisfy the purpose of the quest (Mussell 1993: 118).

Thus far, I have discussed the dynamics of "what worked" in the context of the immediate relations embodied within the AHWS partnership. However, the opening of new space brought about by cooperation in relation to difference in the partnership was not just or even primarily an inner-directed phenomenon. At the heart of what is shared in common is a deep motivation to assist the healing and wellness of Aboriginal peoples. This outward-looking focus is consistently supported and reinforced by the Elders who ensure that people remember "why" they are involved. In terms of the process of "how" to bring about desirable change, a decidedly value-centred and development-oriented approach is adopted in the Strategy. Healing and wellness, discussed in this dissertation as complex concepts operating on multiple social levels, cannot be programmed as fixes to problems. Understood from a long-term developmental perspective as human and spiritual processes, "timing" becomes a way of acknowledging the readiness to change and of naming the deeper process of change or transformation that has already begun.

In a very particular and unique way the meaning of social policy itself is transformed, becoming more accessible and meaningful to Aboriginal people. Maggie Hodgson explains that

Native social policy is still, by and large, an oral one. Social policy can be seen in the sober Pow Wow. We had only 100 sober Indians at our first Pow Wow in 1974 but now have 5,000 sober Indians who come for the three-day event. If you want to attend this celebration you must attend sober. That is social policy. Mainstream society thinks you can legislate behaviour. We believe social policy is built through role models and setting new community norms.

Social policy is a community saying, "We will have sweat lodges as part of our healing processes" or "We will have a potlatch to honour our people who worked in preparation of the gravesite." Social policy is sitting in a circle to treat alcoholism or to train counsellors. That circle becomes a metaphor for relationship and community, and a commitment to people's spirits touching.

So when the government of Canada set out legislation that made ceremony illegal, it also affected security, ideology, rituals, belonging, beliefs, access to resources, time together, healing and justice. It affected the ideas, values and principles on which community mental health was maintained. Some of our elders hid the ceremonies and continued them in secret. Their courage, grit and determination helped families come back together and rebuild a new version of Indian culture (1992: 21).

Those who participated in the development of AHWS have helped to transform the meaning of social policy in this direction by adopting a process-oriented, developmental approach to policy-making based on core Aboriginal values. The values of respect, sharing, honesty and kindness, reflected in the dynamics of the partnership become embodied as elements of the Strategy itself. A model of development based on cooperation leads to a "flexible" strategy where communities are not forced into same mould. Difference as a principle is both spiritual and practical; it enables the Strategy to meet needs where people are at and in terms of how communities define their needs and issues. Recognizing different kinds of needs leads to a greater sense of equality and justice: not everybody gets the same but resources are targeted or shared in relation to need.

Cooperation in relation to difference means that partnerships between Aboriginal organizations and First Nations are encouraged in terms of programming. Lastly, as a developmental approach, the Strategy takes the long-term view of change and is designed in phases over twenty years intended to affect a whole generation.

As discussed in Chapters Five and Seven this approach to policy development involved a learning curve for many of the government participants more accustomed to planning in the short term and not used to dealing with issues in such a comprehensive manner at the planning stage. It challenged their notions of efficiency and time. However, eventually by engaging in an Aboriginal-led process of learning by doing inside the partnership, they came to understand and support a development-oriented approach to policy-making as more efficient and ultimately, more effective and worthwhile in terms of outcomes. Because so much time and energy had been spent up front in developing relationships and using each stage of the process to enhance communication, mobilize people and build consensus, many of the issues which typically arise later on during implementation were dealt with, in effect, during the developmental phase. Part of the genius of the AHWS approach is precisely that it focuses on "process rather than plan"; a dynamic that Leonard (1997) reminds us is a hallmark of creative change. In a context of having to make "ethical judgments without rules" (p.149) and under conditions which offer no guarantees, emphasizing "process rather than plan" (p.163) can provide

for the kind of welfare which no longer excludes the Other, nor includes it as a dominated part of itself, but respects the diversity of the Other because it understands that its knowledge as an agent of welfare is not absolute or universal but based upon cultural discourses and practices which are always open to critique (p. 162).

It is my view that value-based, process-oriented, social development approaches to policy-

making such as AHWS are ultimately successful because of their integrity: they openly, critically and consistently strive to “walk the talk” in terms of values and behaviours, vision and action.

In one of the articles she wrote before her untimely death, Sally Weaver (1990) forecasted that a paradigm shift in policy-making was “inevitable” because “old paradigm ‘solutions’ will become less tenable as new paradigm thinking reveals their outmoded analysis of the state’s obligation to First Nations peoples” (p. 8). Weaver identified joint policy-making forums and joint management systems as part of that new thinking (p. 13-14). While I do not believe that such a shift is necessarily inevitable, the AHWS case study reveals that it is indeed possible. The current disjunction provides openings that can be used constructively towards a paradigm shift in thought and action. In this context, the AHWS story calls our attention to the importance of policy development, to epistemological issues in relation to that development and to the dynamics of social processes in policy-making that can facilitate social change.

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APPENDIX 1      Research Proposal

(approved by the Joint Steering Committee of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy, Feb.15, 1996)

**Draft Research Proposal**

"The Healing Strategy is innovative not only in its emphasis on healing and wellness, but also because it sees the empowerment of Aboriginal people as being a central component in the healing of individuals, families, communities and Aboriginal nations."

For Generations to Come: The Time is Now (p.iii)

**Purpose of the Research:**

To document and to analyze the policy-making process of the design and development of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy (AHWS) with the intent that the learnings from this experience could be used to assist development in Aboriginal communities and to inform other organizations and governments.

**Outcome of the Research:**

Based on the above documentation and analysis, a written report on the design and development phases of the AHWS will be produced (1988 - 1994). The report will contain three parts:

- a) detailed chronologies of the design and development of the Family Healing Strategy and the Aboriginal Health Policy and the period where they join to form the AHWS;
- b) an explanation of the design and development phases of AHWS policy-making process;
- c) some learnings which can be drawn from this policy-making exercise.

The research will also be used as data for a doctoral thesis.

**Central issue to be addressed in this research:**

How was the design and development of the AHWS similar to and different from other social policy making processes impacting Aboriginal communities and was it more effective than other processes?

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## **Framework for Data Collection and Analysis:**

One framework for designing the collection of data and for data analysis is drawn from the Medicine Wheel. The Medicine Wheel addresses impact on four levels: the individual, the family, the clan, and the nation. Viewed as a whole, these four elements constitute the community.

For the purpose of this study, individuals will be treated as individuals; family will constitute caucuses, sub-committees, working groups i.e. parts which are not the whole; clan will be understood as the organizations/ministries belonging to the Aboriginal Health Policy Working Group and the Aboriginal Family Healing Joint Steering Committee and the workings of the Working Group and Committee; and nation will refer to those impacts beyond those two structures.

In adopting this framework, two assumptions we are making are that everyone who participated in the design and development of the AHWS was impacted by the process and that change occurred as a result of those impacts. In order to document and analyze these impacts and the changes which occurred, we need to name the actual practices we developed and the tacit rules or way those practices emerged in the course of designing the strategy. For example, if during an interview a person identified "consensus" as an important principle or practice, then they would be asked to explain how/where this practice emerged, how it worked out for them, in the caucuses or committees they belonged to and at the JSC, what they perceive are the strengths and weaknesses of this form of decision-making, and what they learned from working this way.

## **Interview Themes and Questions:**

### **Structural and Organizational Features:**

1. What is similar in your experience about this policy practice from others you have been involved in? What is different in your experience?

### **Strategic and Transformative events:**

2. In reviewing this chronology, what would you identify as the important moments in the development of the AHWS (Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy or Aboriginal Health Policy, or both where applicable)?

### **Cultural practices:**

3. Keeping in mind your own tradition, values, and beliefs, what role do you think culture played in the design and development of the AHWS? Personally, and in terms of the organizational culture

you are part of eg. First Nations or government

**Dynamics of Working Relationships:**

4. Looking at this diagram of the medicine wheel

a) how were you involved in the process in terms of your own job, your organization, the working groups or caucus you belonged to and the Joint Steering Committee

b) how do you feel you contributed to the outcome of the strategy?

c) tell me about what other people did that you think was important in terms of the outcome of the strategy (and why)?

d) given the numbers and groups of people involved in designing and developing the strategy, what reflections do you have now about those those relationships i.e. how people worked or did not work together?

**Methods to be employed:**

The overall design of this study employs a participatory or collaborative approach to doing research. This is exemplified by the work of the Research and Review Working Group in collaboration with the principal researcher. Accountability and final decisions rest with the Joint Steering Committee (see terms of reference attached). The research approach in terms of data collection and analysis is that of interpretive inquiry; an approach which is appropriate for exploring, describing and offering explanations about a given phenomenon in an in-depth manner.

Three methods will be used to explore and to develop this case study: review of written documentation, interviews with individuals, and focus groups.

1. A review of the written documentation on the design and development phases of the AHWS (up to Dec./94) will be undertaken with a view to developing a detailed chronology of events which occurred during these phases.

This chronology will serve several purposes. It will provide a set of facts concerning the phases of the work, the length of the work, key decisions made. It will also be used to help jog people's memories during the interviews and focus group meetings.

The files of the AHWS Project Office will be used and where available the files of other participating ministries and organizations.

The Joint Steering Committee will approve the final chronology to be used for interviews and for publication of the research findings.

2. Because of the complex nature of this policy process (eg. 8 Aboriginal organizations representing different constituencies, 11 provincial ministries and 2 federal observers) one-to-one interviews will be sought with as many former and current participants of the process as possible. Interviews will also be sought with some key informants who were influential in decision-making but were not directly involved in the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy. This is likely to involve 40-50 interviews.

Interviews will be transcribed and participants will be given an opportunity to correct their transcripts before data is coded and entered into the computer.

3. Focus groups may also be held when individual interviews are completed in order to give participants the opportunity to share perceptions and insights among themselves eg. the Aboriginal caucus, the co-leads group, a sub-committee. These meetings could also be used to clarify major disparities in perceptions or experiences on key issues arising from the interviews.

The number of groups, format, and focus will be determined by the Research and Review Working Group once the initial data analysis of the interviews is completed.

By using several different methods to collect information (the principle of triangulation) it is hoped that any systematic errors will be minimized.

#### **The Benefits and Implications in doing this study:**

From discussions at the Joint Steering Committee (September/95) and in the Research and Review Working Group, several benefits to undertaking this study were identified. The Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy is being recognized increasingly as a unique example of joint Aboriginal-government policy development in Canada. A number of Aboriginal organizations and government ministries in Canada and in other jurisdictions have requested information regarding the process and content of the strategy.

In addition, the strategy is often mentioned as a new model or approach to doing community development in Aboriginal communities. By providing some documentation and analysis from those who were involved in designing and developing the strategy, the strategy could be used to help people teach themselves about how to design their own consultations, develop programs, and design joint management schemes. As a unique approach to policy-making which incorporates community development, it could also be integrated

into a wide variety of courses in educational institutions.

At the same time, however, there are several risks in presenting the strategy as a model or framework for other organizations to use. If people are not ready to engage in this type of process or if they do not have the same ingredients to work with or the appropriate substitutes, it can be detrimental to undertake. We wish to present this research as a collaborative reflection on our experience, rather than a model to be adopted in a rigid way. Thus, it is incumbent on us to be clear on what the internal and external conditions were that enabled the AHWS to happen and the factors which placed limitations on the work. It is also important for us to explain the level of experience and organization required, including a statement that this process is not for everyone.

In a similar vein, we have identified a risk that the message of "healing and wellness" itself could become a new "dogma". To minimize this, it will be important to highlight the principles we developed and to indicate where we were prescriptive in applying these principles and where we were flexible in our practice.

In choosing to document the process of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy, to engage in constructive assessment of the process and to share that information publicly, the integrity of the individuals and organizations involved, both Aboriginal and government, should be preserved. A set of ethical principles to be adhered to in the research process for the purposes of producing a report and writing a thesis is defined below.

#### **Ethical Principles to Guide the Research Process:**

##### The Research Paradigm

To assure ownership and accountability, the Joint Steering Committee has adopted the ethical principles developed by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP). They represent the standard of "best practice" adopted by the Commission in its research program to ensure that appropriate respect be given to the cultures, knowledge and values of Aboriginal peoples (RCAP: 1).

RCAP adopts collaborative research as the specific approach that should be followed in research involving Aboriginal communities and organizations. RCAP states that:

- In studies that are carried out in the general community and that are likely to affect particular Aboriginal communities, consultation on planning, execution and evaluation of results shall be sought through appropriate Aboriginal bodies.
- In community-based studies, researchers shall ensure that a



representative cross-section of community experiences and perceptions is included.

- The convening of advisory groups to provide guidance on the conduct of research shall not pre-empt the procedures laid down in this part but shall supplement them.

For the purpose of this study, the JSC will interpret these principles as follows:

The planning, execution and evaluation of the research is the mandate of the Research and Review Working Group, in which both Aboriginal and government people are members.

A cross-section of experiences and perspectives of participants from Aboriginal organizations and government ministries will be sought.

The Research and Review Working Group will provide guidance on the conduct of the research and shall not pre-empt the authority or the decisions of the JSC.

#### The Conduct of Research

The following RCAP guidelines regarding consent will be adhered to in the conduct of this study (RCAP:4):

- Informed consent shall be obtained from all persons or groups participating in research. Such consent may be given by individuals whose personal experience is being portrayed, by groups in assembly, or by authorized representatives of communities or organizations.
- Consent should ordinarily be obtained in writing.
- Individuals or groups participating in research shall be provided with information about the purpose and nature of the research activities, including expected benefits and risks.
- No pressure shall be applied to induce participation in research.
- Participants shall be informed that they are free to withdraw from the research at any time.
- Participants should be informed of the degree of confidentiality and anonymity that will be maintained in the study.

In addition, for the purpose of this study, the identity of all current and former members of Joint Steering Committee will remain anonymous and pseudonyms will be used in all research findings and publications. Data will be entered into the computer with a

pseudonym. Only the principal researcher will have access to the identity/pseudonym list. Once the report and the thesis have been produced the list of names and pseudonyms will be destroyed.

Written informed consent on the basis of anonymity will be sought for all current and former members of the Joint Steering Committee. An information sheet about the study and an informed consent form is included below.

In the case of non-JSC members, such as people influential to the decision-making process (Aboriginal leadership, former members of the Ontario Cabinet, deputy ministers etc.), they will be offered the choice as to whether they wish to be anonymous or to go on the record in their official capacity.

Access to full transcripts will be limited to the principal researcher. However, to minimize the misinterpretation of information and bias, access to parts of transcripts will be made available on an anonymous basis to members of the Research and Review Working Group for the purpose of checking the principal researcher's coding and analysis (the research principles of inter-rater agreement and group validation). Members of the Research and Review Working Group will be asked to sign a form pledging confidentiality with regard to the contents of transcripts they will have access to for this purpose (see form below).

Identifying significant problem areas or issues is an important part of this study if the learning from this process is to be shared and used by other organizations. Divergent views should be identified with honesty and sensitivity in the research findings. Such issues will be addressed in a pro-active and constructive manner during data collection and analysis. For example, "In the future, if we (you) were involved in a process like this again, or if this issue emerged again, what could we (you) do differently?"

### Research Findings

The Royal Commission recommends the following with regard to access to research results (RCAP:6):

- Results of community research shall be distributed as widely as possible within participating communities, and reasonable efforts shall be made to present results in non-technical language and Aboriginal languages where appropriate.

At a minimum, everyone who participated in the study will receive a copy of the report. Broader dissemination and translation into Aboriginal languages will depend on financial support for the study.

The data will also be used for a thesis and a draft of that thesis

will be vetted with the Research and Review Working Group of the JSC prior to an oral defence of the thesis.

**Research and Review of the Design and Development of the Aboriginal  
Healing and Wellness Strategy**

**Budget Items \***

**Transcribing interviews: \*\***

forty interviews @ 1.5 hrs.,  
40 x 6hrs/interview x \$12./hr = \$2,880.

rental of transcription machine  
@ \$60./mon. x 6 mon. = \$ 360.

**Transcribing 2 focus groups:**

if 2 groups @ 2.5 hours  
then 2 x 11hrs/group x \$12./hr = \$ 264.

**Inputting codes into computer:**

1.5 hrs/transcript x 45 transcripts  
x \$12./hr. = \$ 810.

**Production costs of a report:**

150 copies @ 60 pages + binding = \$ 580.

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\$4,894.

\* This budget assumes in kind costs for faxing, photocopying, long distance calls etc. contributed by the AHWS Project Office for the work of the Research and Review Working Group.

\*\* Verbatim transcriptions of interviews are necessary to ensure accuracy and thoroughness and to avoid misinterpretation. To minimize these risks, those interviewed should be given the option to review and correct transcripts of their interviews before they are coded and entered into the computer. This is only possible if verbatim transcripts are used. Such transcripts also enable the actual words of those interviewed to be used in data analysis and report writing, as distinct from a researcher's interpretation of someone else's thoughts. This increases the trustworthiness or validity of the description and explanation being offered.

\* \* \*

**Suggested Themes to be explored in the research study:**

A) Summarized from audiotaped discussion of the Joint Steering Committee Meeting, Sept. 26, 1995:

- identify strategic moments eg. when the healing strategy and the health policy were joined, the shift from violence to healing etc.
- examine the issue of delegated authority: Aboriginal groups had a mandate but provincial participants did not have the same authority
- look at transformative moments: the use of the life cycle and other Aboriginal paradigms
- examine the type of process: describe the work of sub-committees, principles such as consensus; examine the initial negotiations phase carefully
- look at the process of strategy development: the allocation of resources across the province in terms of geographical distribution and across jurisdictions such as on and off reserve
- the meaning and politics of "joint": joint briefings of Ministers was very unique, writing cabinet submission jointly (Dec/93), maintaining Cabinet secrecy and sharing information
- native sensitivity awareness training: incorporating Aboriginal concepts and values in government forums eg. getting across the meaning of holistic; talk to Edna about the changes she saw happening
- the impact of prayer and ceremony and the role of elders in bringing people together this work, particularly in terms of conflict resolution
- having a vision of healing as opposed to just having a strategy as a policy coordination exercise i.e. the ministries did not always understand the definition of violence but some could understand the vision of healing, other ministries did not buy into it. Full implementation of the strategy depends on how we work with those other ministries. There's a process, strategy and money but it's difficult to move beyond that in a corporate sense.

B) Taken from audiotape of the first meeting of the Reserach and Review Working Group, Oct. 16, 1995:

- examine what roles the different members of the JSC play and what roles did the original groups play in the process (relates to strategic moments, delegated authority and the chronology)

- look at the mix of relationships and the power relationships

- look at the varying degrees of participation of organizations/ministries

- identify the problems we encountered

- look at what difference incorporating a community development approach to policy development makes compared to other approaches

## APPENDIX 3 Chronology

(approved by the Joint Steering Committee of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy, March 15, 1996)

### **Chronology of Events on the Design and Development of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy**

The following outlines in chronological order, the key events in the developmental processes of the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy and the Aboriginal Health Policy leading to the creation and implementation of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy.

#### Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy (AFHS)

1986-1991            Government of Ontario implements a 5 year, provincial-wide strategy known as the Joint Family Violence Initiatives; a multi-ministerial effort led by the Ontario Women's Directorate. Funding is provided for wife and sexual assault prevention programs. Funding for Aboriginal organizations under the Initiatives is transferred to the Native Community Branch, Ministry of Citizenship for Aboriginal programs in southern Ontario and to the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines for northern Ontario.

ONWA receives funding from the Joint Family Violence Initiatives, Native Community Branch, Citizenship to study family violence in their local chapters across Ontario.<sup>1</sup>

Manotsaywin Nanotoojig (Sudbury area bands) hold conferences and workshops and do a needs assessment on family violence.

Federal Government Panel on Violence Against Women provides funding to groups.<sup>2</sup>

NAN Chiefs' resolution regarding women and children leaving communities because of family violence.<sup>3</sup>

1990

Jan., 1990

Two studies are released. Ontario Native Women's Association releases it's report Breaking Free: A Proposal for Change to Aboriginal Family Violence, indicating 8 out of 10 women and 4 out of 10 children are victims of family violence.

Manotsaywin Nanotoojig release the "ZA-GEH-DO-WIN" report, indicating that as many as half of their families experience family violence.<sup>4</sup>

In response, an ad hoc sub-committee on Aboriginal Family Violence, under the Joint Family Violence Initiatives was struck "to develop a coordinated provincial response to Aboriginal wife assault and examine the implications for individual ministries".<sup>5</sup>

Feb., 1990 ONWA meets with Ministers from Native Affairs, Women's Issues, Citizenship, and Solicitor General to formally present its report and discuss issues with the Ontario government. ONWA also presented a brief which requested \$1m for healing lodges. The Ontario government commits to respond in three months after consultation with other ministries.<sup>6</sup>

Apr-May, 1990 The ad hoc inter-ministerial committee on Aboriginal Family Violence and several ministers consider addressing the issue through the development of a provincial strategy.<sup>7</sup>

June, 1990 Ministers of Native Affairs and Women's Issues respond to ONWA's concerns, indicating "in broad terms the government's commitment to engage in a process of discussions with Aboriginal communities to develop a provincial strategy for the treatment and prevention of Aboriginal family violence". The response also emphasizes a need for community consultation and collaboration with a wide range of Aboriginal organizations, many of whom are developing family violence initiatives.<sup>8</sup>

July, 1990 Representatives from OWD, ONAD, MCSS, and the Solicitor General meet to discuss a follow-up process for consultation with ONWA and other provincial Aboriginal groups. They conclude that an inter-ministerial effort is required to address the need for a strategy. Invitations to other ministries are extended but the process is postponed until after the provincial election.<sup>9</sup>

Oct., 1990 Provincial election. NDP comes to power.

Nov., 1990 OWD's 5 year Family Violence Initiatives end. OWD cabinet submission "Violence Against Women: Wife Assault Prevention Initiatives" identifies need for a separate initiative to deal with Aboriginal Family Violence. Funding for the wife assault initiatives includes an initial \$150,000 for



development of a coordinated strategy re:  
Aboriginal Family Violence.<sup>10</sup>

1991

- Dec. 1990-  
Feb. 1991      Planning for the formation of an inter-ministerial committee on Aboriginal family violence and development of terms of reference for working together. First meeting of the Inter-ministerial Working Group on Aboriginal Family Violence, involving ten ministries.<sup>11</sup>
- Mar., - Apr.,  
1991      IWG-AFV meetings focus on proper protocols and Aboriginal groups to invite for an initial consultation meeting. IWG members participate in a one day session to be aware of and sensitive to Aboriginal consultation protocol.<sup>12</sup>
- June, 1991      Letters of invitation sent to 7 provincial Aboriginal organizations inviting them to send two delegates each to discuss the development of a provincial Aboriginal Family Violence Strategy with members of the IWG-AFV.<sup>13</sup>
- July, 1991      Joint meeting of government ministries and Aboriginal organizations to discuss working together in a joint venture to consult and to develop a strategy on Aboriginal family violence. Following introductions and caucus meetings of each group, pre-conditions for Aboriginal participation were outlined by the chair of the Aboriginal caucus. Agreement that implementing an Aboriginal focus will require basic change in Aboriginal-government relationships and that a consultation process with Aboriginal communities will go forward. Funding arrangements and a working group model are also discussed. A joint Agenda Committee is struck.<sup>14</sup>
- Aug., 1991      Signing of the Statement of Political Relationship between First Nations and Ontario, recognizing the inherent right to self-government and adopting relations on a government to government basis.
- Sept., 1991      Second joint meeting of Aboriginal organizations and government ministries now known as a "joint steering committee". Working groups begin to develop terms of reference for the Aboriginal consultation phase, to define the goals and process for consultations, and to examine the scope of the issues involved (including mandated decision-making authority). Agreement that government seek

increased funding for the consultation phase.<sup>15</sup>

Nov., 1991 Third meeting of the "Aboriginal Family Violence Steering Committee". Discussion of draft Terms of Reference which clarified that the Aboriginal organizations would be responsible for consulting with Aboriginal communities. A definition of family violence would follow from the consultation and would not exclude any Aboriginal group.<sup>16</sup>

## 1992

Jan., 1992 Terms of Reference for the Aboriginal Family Violence Consultation approved at a meeting of the Joint Steering Committee on Aboriginal Family Violence.<sup>17</sup>

Apr., 1992 \$635,000 is committed by all ministries involved for two fiscal years. An additional \$100,000 is being sought from the ONAS consultation fund. Agreement to have an elder involved who had experience with family violence-related issues as a member of the Joint Steering Committee. Each organization discusses their consultation plans and process. Press conference to announce the consultation is planned for April 8. Marion Boyd, Minister of Women's Issues is to read a statement in the legislature that same day.<sup>18</sup>

June, 1992 Elder Edna Manitowabi and several policy analysts from the Aboriginal organizations join the process. Edna gives a presentation on the development of family violence in Aboriginal families. Frank McNulty, Medical Services Branch, Health and Welfare gives an overview of the federal family violence initiative announced in March, 1991 and of the Brighter Futures program. How the Toronto consultations would proceed and an update on the other consultations is discussed. Because of future government funding deadlines, the importance of completing the consultations in September is reiterated.<sup>19</sup>

Sept., 1992 A three-day retreat is held to hear presentations of the community consultations, to begin to integrate the findings for a consolidated report to Cabinet, and to develop a plan of action for the strategy development phase.<sup>20</sup>

Oct., 1992 Final Consultation Reports by most of the Aboriginal organizations are submitted and drafting

of the consolidated report takes place. Input to and drafting of the Cabinet submission occurs.

Nov., 1992

Letter from Regional Chief Gordon Peters requests that the Cabinet submission be delayed until January in order that it be signed off by the Chiefs of Ontario.<sup>21</sup>

Aboriginal Family Violence Joint Steering Committee Consolidated Report of Community Consultation is released.<sup>22</sup>

Dec., 1992

The Cabinet submission does not go forward to the Cabinet Committee on Justice in order to ensure that the joint process is adhered to. The Joint Steering Committee reviews a draft of the Background (non pro forma part) of the Cabinet Submission. Changes to this document incorporate the concerns of the Chiefs' office. Agreement to not identify target groups as such but to articulate priorities. Working groups are struck to develop Terms of Reference for the Strategy, to articulate roles and responsibilities, to deal with federal involvement, to develop principles, to prioritize community needs (north and south), and to work on an appropriate justice model (sub-committee of the community needs working group).<sup>23</sup>

1993

Jan., 1993

Letter from Regional Chief Gordon Peters to Marion Boyd, Minister of Community and Social Services indicating support for the background report which will accompany the cabinet submission.<sup>24</sup>

Submission to the Aboriginal Affairs sub-committee of the Cabinet Committee on Justice.<sup>25</sup>

Terms of reference for the Coordinating Committee and working groups are circulated. Discussion on adding the Ministry of Community and Social Services to the lead ministries (OWD and ONAS) and the need for a centralized structure to manage implementation. Aboriginal organizations object to MCSS as a lead but the discussion to be revisited later. Initial discussion of different management models.<sup>26</sup>

Feb., 1993

Discussion on adding MCSS to the lead ministries is revisited. The ministries indicate that it would make their internal work easier. Aboriginal organizations willing to entertain the idea only if

the Ministry of Health is added as well. Reports reviewed from working groups developing the Strategy.<sup>27</sup>

Submission to Cabinet Committee on Justice.<sup>28</sup>

Mar., 1993

A format for the report on the Strategy is outlined and a process to integrate the work of various working groups into the report is identified.<sup>29</sup>

Cabinet submission to go forward to develop a strategy is approved.

Apr., 1993

A two-day retreat is held in Thunder Bay to finalize and integrate the work of the north and south sub-groups and the justice sub-group of the Community Needs working group.<sup>30</sup>

Indepth presentation and discussion of the issues being addressed by working groups including an alternative justice system, a management model and federal involvement.<sup>31</sup>

June, 1993

A draft of the report is reviewed by the Joint Steering Committee. More work is needed on the transition and phasing and recommendations sections. The final report is due July 10th for ratification by the Aboriginal organizations. It is reported that deputy ministers are looking for financial implications and a focus on phasing of the Strategy. Principles for phasing of the Strategy are agreed upon. A budget summary reflecting the identified needs of Aboriginal communities is to be included.<sup>32</sup>

July, 1993

A Draft Final Report of the Aboriginal Family Healing Joint Steering Committee entitled For Generations to Come: The Time is Now, A Strategy for Aboriginal Family Healing, is released and widely distributed to the Aboriginal organizations and communities and ministries involved.<sup>33</sup>

Jul.-Aug.,  
1993

Ratification by the Aboriginal leadership of the Draft Final Report is sought.

Sept., 1993

It is reported that all Aboriginal organizations have approved the Report in principle. There are also no outstanding policy issues raised by ministries and concerns expressed relate to implementation and funding. Minor changes are required to release the Report as a final

document.<sup>34</sup>

A feast is held to celebrate the work of the Aboriginal Family Healing Joint Steering Committee.

Dec., 1993 Aboriginal Sub-Committee of the Cabinet Committee on Justice approves the cabinet submission, which includes the Final Report of the Aboriginal Family Healing Joint Steering Committee.

**1994**

Jan., 1994 The Cabinet Committee on Justice recommends approval of the cabinet submission on the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy subject to resolution of funding issues and its relationship to the Aboriginal Health Policy.<sup>35</sup>

Feb., 1994 At a Cabinet retreat where government initiatives are being ranked and prioritized, there is discussion that the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy and the Aboriginal Health Policy may be downgraded from corporate initiatives to internally managed initiatives by the lead ministries involved. Four conditions are identified if the Aboriginal Health Policy is to retain its current status as a corporate initiative: consider integrating the AHP with the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy, reduce projected costs, find the resources, and engage federal involvement.

Apr., 1994 Internal discussion among ministers in preparation for a follow-up Cabinet focusing retreat on priorities indicates that progress has been made on the conditions set out and that both the Aboriginal Health Policy and the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy will remain corporate initiatives. Some ministers are prepared to support this if the two processes are integrated in order to maximize savings, provide a more holistic approach, and minimize the number of management structures.<sup>36</sup>

The issue of integration is discussed at a joint meeting of representatives from the Aboriginal Health Policy working group and the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy. Several organizations are ready to go forward with integrating both processes in order that both receive Cabinet approval. Aboriginal support for integration is conditional on Cabinet approval of the principles and policy directions contained in the two distinct documents.

Other organizations await discussion and direction from the PPC of the Chiefs of Ontario.<sup>37</sup>

May, 1994

Submissions to Cabinet and the Treasury Board are redrafted and resubmitted on the basis of an integrated strategy, known as the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy.

Discussion among ONAS, OWD, MCSS, and MOH takes place as to which ministry will lead during the negotiations and planning phase (upon Cabinet approval and prior to implementation) and which ministry will lead during implementation. It is decided that the Native Affairs Secretariat will lead during planning phase and the Ministry of Community and Social Services will lead during implementation.

June, 1994

Cabinet approves the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy on June 15th. A press release is prepared. Bud Wildman, Minister for Native Affairs announces the strategy in the legislature on June 20th, on the eve of First Nations Solidarity day. A reception is held for the Aboriginal organizations and ministries involved.

### Aboriginal Health Policy (AHP)

1984-1988

A number of Aboriginal organizations serving Aboriginal communities in Ontario identify a gap in the equitable provision of health services. With less federal funding, the organizations look to the province to fill that gap (eg. provincial home nursing care, addiction treatment centres etc.). After two years of lobbying the province with little result, the Union of Ontario Indians (UOI) concludes that a new, separate strategy to deal with Aboriginal health needs is required. UOI undertakes a feasibility study to assess the implications of becoming involved with the province and to determine a process for developing an Aboriginal-specific health strategy or policy.<sup>38</sup> UOI lobbies the Ministry of Health (MOH) to create an Aboriginal coordination office. MOH establishes a one-person coordination unit in 1987 to deal with increased demands for services from Aboriginal communities in Ontario with the support of an advisory committee of UOI. In 1988, MOH commissions a study by an Aboriginal consultant regarding the

development of an Aboriginal health policy in response to Aboriginal concerns.<sup>39</sup>

Oct., 1990 Provincial election. NDP takes office.

Dec., 1990 Budget and jobs posted for the coordination unit in MOH.

**1991**

Sept., 1991 MOH coordination unit becomes the Aboriginal Health Office. A former staff member of an Aboriginal organization is hired as Coordinator, along with two other staff positions.

Fall, 1991 Development of an Aboriginal Health Policy "in partnership and collaboration" is considered as part of the MOH's internal Goals and Strategic Directions.<sup>40</sup>

Oct., 1991 The Minister meets with Aboriginal organizations where a commitment to "partnership and collaboration" and the development of an Aboriginal health policy is expressed.<sup>41</sup>

Dec., 1991 A two-day workshop takes place with eight Aboriginal organizations and the MOH in which the need for a policy is articulated and five objectives are developed to guide a policy development process. The objectives are: to identify ways to improve Aboriginal access to, participation in and the quality of service which Aboriginal people experience; to identify ways to increase sensitivity to Aboriginal health issues, needs and cultural traditions; to articulate priorities of Aboriginal communities; the recognition and development of Aboriginal designed health services; to establish a strategy to address Aboriginal health needs and priorities in the context of the inherent right of self-government.<sup>42</sup>

**1992**

Jan., 1992 Commitments sought within the MOH and within Aboriginal organizations to participate in a joint process on the basis of the five objectives. MOH Goals and Strategic Directions, including development of an Aboriginal health policy, is approved by Cabinet.<sup>43</sup>

Feb., 1992 The organizations and MOH adopt the MCU model for policy development which includes a Senior Committee of Chiefs and executive directors and a

Working Committee of organizations' technical staff. Unlike the MCU process, the need to ensure a community consultation phase is agreed to. Discussion begins regarding the terms of reference, a 12 month work plan, the consultation phase and the financial resources required.<sup>44</sup>

Mar., 1992

The Planning and Priorities Committee of Ontario Chiefs approves the process.<sup>45</sup> A series of "interchange meetings" before and after consultations are planned between on-reserve and off-reserve organizations to respect distinctive interests and to avoid the potential for developing two different policies.<sup>46</sup> MOH signs agreements with Aboriginal organizations for financial costs to carry out a consultation process with Aboriginal communities, based on the agreed-upon five objectives.

May-Sept.,  
1992

Aboriginal organizations carry out the consultations using various formats.

Oct-Nov.,  
1992

Organizations draft their consultation reports and seek endorsement of their leaderships. Interface meetings held among on-reserve groups and among off-reserve groups to begin to formulate principles, priorities, and major recommendations flowing from the consultations.<sup>47</sup>

Dec., 1992

Aboriginal groups and the MOH Aboriginal Health Office discuss next steps and consider approaches to be used in developing an actual policy. A basic outline of the policy (background, issues, goals/vision of the strategy, principles, priorities, resources, recommendations) is agreed to. Decision to hold a four day retreat, which would include other MOH branch staff, to translate the consultations into a policy framework.<sup>48</sup> This approach was suggested because of the effectiveness of the Aboriginal Family Healing retreat held a few months previously.

1993

Jan., 1993

The retreat is cancelled unilaterally by the MOH without explanation. Some Aboriginal organizations question the commitment of MOH officials to the process.<sup>49</sup>



- Mar. 29-  
Apr.1, 1993
- The retreat is held with Aboriginal organizations and MOH branch staff to develop a first draft policy document based on the consultation findings. A Goals/Vision Statement regarding the desired state of health for Aboriginal people and Principles to guide the policy and its implementation are articulated. The three strategic directions of health promotion, access to services, and planning and representation are developed. A draft Retreat Report and a background paper outlining the development of the policy and health status, including issues and barriers are produced subsequently by Aboriginal participants and circulated within the MOH.
- May- June,  
1993
- Working groups develop options and specific recommendations (legislative, policy, administrative, programs and services and resource requirements) as well as proposed costs to meet identified needs. The Aboriginal Health Office provides an analysis of expenditures on Aboriginal health by the MOH, identifies MOH legislation for review and federal/provincial overlaps.<sup>50</sup>
- July, 1993
- Draft Aboriginal Health Policy is completed and circulated within Aboriginal organizations for further development and ratification by their leaderships. Approvals in principle are given by the Aboriginal leadership. Simultaneously, the MOH begins internal approval processes.
- Sept., 1993
- A second retreat is held with the Aboriginal leadership and the Deputy and Assistant Deputy Minister of Health to determine whether there are any significant outstanding issues. Representatives indicated their willingness to continue and reiterated the importance of recognizing community autonomy, Aboriginal distinctiveness (political and cultural), government to government relationship, respect for traditional healing practices and Aboriginal concepts of health, community control and self-determination. The deputy minister conveyed support for the directions outlined in the policy and its consistency with Ontario's vision of health.<sup>51</sup>
- Oct., 1993
- A second phase to the policy development process is designed. Objectives include meetings with Aboriginal memberships to promote awareness of and discussion of the draft policy at the community level and to determine their priorities for

implementation. The development of an implementation process and a process for dialogue between federal and provincial governments on Aboriginal health also form part of the second phase agenda.<sup>52</sup>

Nov., 1993 Final policy document is submitted to the MOH and to the Aboriginal organizations' policy approval and ratification processes. MOH submits Draft Aboriginal Health Policy to the Aboriginal Subcommittee of the Cabinet Committee on Justice and the Cabinet Committee on Justice.

#### 1994

Jan., 1994 Cabinet Committee on Justice adopts the Aboriginal Health Policy as a strategic framework and recommends it to Cabinet. They further recommend that MOH, in conjunction with the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Women's Directorate, and the Native Affairs Secretariat, explore opportunities to coordinate and integrate the Aboriginal Health Policy and the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy, following discussions with the Aboriginal organizations.<sup>53</sup>

Feb., 1994 At a Cabinet retreat where government initiatives are being ranked and prioritized, there is discussion that the Aboriginal Health Policy and the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy may be downgraded from corporate initiatives to internally managed initiatives by the lead ministries involved. Four conditions are identified if the Aboriginal Health Policy is to retain its current status as a corporate initiative: consider integrating the AHP with the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy, reduce projected costs, find the resources, and engage federal involvement.

Mar., 1994 Pursuant to a discussion about priority programs for AHP implementation, the possibility of integrating the Aboriginal Health Policy and the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy into one management structure is raised by NAN based on two principles: decisions on implementation rest at the community level and must be holistic as the two initiatives cannot be artificially separated. Grand Council Treaty 3 identifies that an integrated approach would represent "healing and wellness". Agreement to arrange a meeting among representatives involved in both processes. Several

organizations still gathering community feedback for Phase Two objectives and request more time. <sup>54</sup>

Apr., 1994

Internal discussion among ministers in preparation for a follow-up Cabinet focusing retreat on priorities indicates that progress has been made on the conditions set out and that both the Aboriginal Health Policy and the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy will remain corporate initiatives. Some ministers are prepared to support this if the two processes are integrated in order to maximize savings, provide a more holistic approach, and minimize the number of management structures. <sup>55</sup>

Concern and frustration is expressed by some on-reserve representatives that the health policy process is being Ministry driven, resulting in a provincial policy for Aboriginal people, not reflective of a First Nations policy. More time is required for some Aboriginal organizations to give input for revisions to the Aboriginal Health Policy. No consensus is arrived at. Concerns are communicated to the Aboriginal Health Office (MOH) and are to be addressed further at the Planning and Priorities Committee (PPC) of the Chiefs of Ontario. <sup>56</sup>

The issue of integration is discussed at a joint meeting of representatives from the Aboriginal Health Policy working group and the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy. Several organizations are ready to go forward with integrating both processes in order that both receive Cabinet approval. Aboriginal support for integration is conditional on Cabinet approval of the principles and policy directions contained in the two distinct documents. Other organizations await discussion and direction from the PPC of the Chiefs of Ontario. <sup>57</sup>

May, 1994

Submissions to Cabinet and the Treasury Board are redrafted and resubmitted on the basis of an integrated strategy, known as the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy.

Discussion among ONAS, OWD, MCSS, and MOH takes place as to which ministry will lead during the negotiations and planning phase (upon Cabinet approval and prior to implementation) and which ministry will lead during implementation. It is decided that the Native Affairs Secretariat will lead during planning phase and the Ministry of Community and Social Services will lead during

implementation.

June, 1994 All Ontario Chiefs' Conference ratifies the final draft of the Aboriginal Health Policy for submission to the MOH. The AOCC further resolves to appoint a Chiefs Negotiation Committee to begin negotiations for the implementation of the Policy with the Ontario government.<sup>58</sup>

Cabinet approves the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy on June 15th. A press release is prepared. Bud Wildman, Minister for Native Affairs announces the strategy in the legislature on June 20th, on the eve of First Nations Solidarity day. A reception is held for the Aboriginal organizations and ministries involved.

### Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy (AHWS)

July, 1994 Meeting of the Aboriginal Caucus and a joint meeting of the Aboriginal Caucus with the co-lead ministries, ONAS, OWD, MCSS, and MOH. Funding Guidelines and Criteria for Implementation and Framework Agreement requirements are presented by government officials. First Nation representatives request time to review the information and to seek a mandate on the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy from the Chiefs' Planning and Priorities Committee in order to go forward with developing a co-management process.<sup>59</sup> Process and timetable for this planning phase, and possible federal involvement are also discussed.<sup>60</sup>

August, 1994 Aboriginal caucus meets to produce agreement on Aboriginal co-chairs, draft terms of reference, identify sub-committees and make recommendations regarding the participation of elders.<sup>61</sup>

Sept., 1994 The AHWS Co-Management Committee meet to review the work of the Aboriginal Caucus and sub-committees i.e. terms of reference, models of implementation, draft framework agreement and timetable. Sub-committees are identified to deal with these issues as well as the issue of the involvement of the federal government.<sup>62</sup>

Some members of the Priority and Planning Committee of the Chiefs of Ontario do not accept the amalgamation of the Aboriginal Health Policy and the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy. Concerns include the prioritizing of the funding

allocations, the level of funding, and the process of co-management. A letter is drafted to the ministries requesting a meeting to negotiate an interim First Nations model.<sup>63</sup> Following further discussion with PPC and Independent First Nations the letter is directed to the Co-management Committee and technicians are directed to prepare a strategy to access funding under the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy.<sup>64</sup> Letter from the Regional Chief sent to co-lead Ministers requesting a meeting with the PPC to discuss a First Nation Framework Agreement on the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy.<sup>65</sup>

Oct., 1994

Some First Nations organizations indicate that they are not in agreement with the PPC decision. UOI and NAN express their position to remain in the Co-management process.<sup>66</sup> PPC conference call to review the PPC position and the confusion on the PPC decision and Co-management involvement.<sup>67</sup>

At a joint committee meeting of the AHWS, the Terms of Reference for implementation and the Draft Framework Agreement are agreed upon. Further work occurs with respect to funding streams and the Project Review Committee. Discussion regarding the position of the Chiefs of Ontario continues. It is also indicated that the Chiefs of Ontario do not view the implementation of the AHWS as part of the inherent right to self-government because it is within the legislative authority of the province.<sup>68</sup> The Planning and Priorities Committee of the Chiefs of Ontario decides to participate in a joint process to implement the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy.<sup>69</sup>

The first call goes out for proposals from communities to receive funding under the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy.

Nov., 1994

The overall framework agreement which includes the draft framework agreement and the implementation agreement is discussed and approved. Funding issues and the need for nominations for the Project Review Committee are also discussed.<sup>70</sup>

The implementation agreement goes to Cabinet.

Dec., 1994

The Project Review Committee reviews proposals and decides which proposals will be accepted.

#### **ENDNOTES**

1. Ontario Women's Directorate. **Aboriginal Family Violence: A Chronology of Events Leading to the Development of a Provincial Strategy.** undated.
2. Research and Review Working Group meeting, November 23, 1995, Toronto. **Audio tape and transcript, p.1-3.**
3. **IBID.**
4. Ontario Women's Directorate. **Note on Background for the Aboriginal Family Violence Inter-Ministerial Working Group, March 11, 1991.**
5. Ontario Women's Directorate. **Aboriginal Family Violence: A Chronology of Events Leading to the Development of a Provincial Strategy.**
6. The meeting took place on February 20th, 1990. **Summary of Developments, Interministerial Working Group - Aboriginal Family Violence, 1990-1991, p.1.**
7. May 30, 1990. **Letter from Ian Scott, Minister Responsible for Native Affairs to Mavis Wilson, Minister of Responsible for Women's Issues.**
8. June 27, 1990, cover letter and the following report sent to Ms. Susan Hare, President, ONWA. **A Response to the Ontario Native Women's Association Report and Brief on Aboriginal Family Violence, co-signed by Ian Scott, Minister Responsible for Native Affairs and Mavis Wilson, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues.**
9. **Summary of Developments, Interministerial Working Group - Aboriginal Family Violence, 1990-1991, p.1-2.**
10. **IBID.**
11. **IBID:2.**
12. **IBID.**
13. **IBID.**
14. **Meeting to Discuss Development of an Aboriginal Family Violence Strategy, Toronto, July 9, 1991, Minutes, prepared by Barbara Westfall, edited by Marlene Brant Castellano.**
15. **Meeting to Discuss Development of an Aboriginal Family Violence Strategy, Toronto, September 19-20, 1991. Minutes, prepared by J. Bomberry.**
16. **Aboriginal Family Violence Steering Committee. Meeting #3, November 19-20, 1991, Toronto. Minutes.**

17. Joint Steering Committee on Aboriginal Family Violence, January 27-28, 1992, Toronto. Minutes.
18. Aboriginal Family Violence Joint Steering Committee, April 7-8, 1992, Toronto. Minutes.
19. Aboriginal Family Violence Steering Committee, June 2-3, 1992, Toronto. Minutes.
20. Aboriginal Family Violence Steering Committee Meeting, September 21-24, 1992, Elmhirst Resort, Keene, Ontario. Minutes.
21. November 3, 1992. Letter to Sylvia Maracle, Co-chair, AFVJSC from Gordon B. Peters, Ontario Regional Chief.
22. November 12, 1992.
23. Aboriginal Family Violence Joint Steering Committee, December 14-15, 1992, Toronto. Minutes.
24. Letter dated January 6, 1993.
25. Cabinet submission submitted on January 21, 1993.
26. Aboriginal Family Violence Coordinating Committee Meeting, January 28, 1993. Minutes.
27. Aboriginal Family Violence Joint Steering Committee meeting, February 22-23, 1993, Toronto. Minutes.
28. Originally scheduled for February 5th but postponed to February 25th due to a Cabinet shuffle. This cabinet submission was seeking approval to go forward and develop a strategy based on the community consultations.
29. Aboriginal Family Violence Coordinating Committee meeting, March 26, 1993. Minutes.
30. April 15-16, 1993.
31. Aboriginal Family Healing Joint Steering Committee. April 26-27, 1993, Toronto. Minutes.
32. Aboriginal Family Healing Joint Steering Committee meeting, June 24-25, 1993, Toronto. Minutes.
33. July 1, 1993.
34. The document is released as a Final Report at the end of September.
35. Cabinet Committee on Justice decision. January 20th. 1994.

36. Letter by Hon. Bud Wildman, Minister of Native Affairs to the Hon. Ruth Grier, Minister of Health, April 7, 1994.
37. Joint Meeting held April 20, 1994. Minutes.
38. Meeting of the Research and Review Working Group, November 23, 1995, Toronto. Audio tape and transcript, p.1-4.
39. IBID.
40. MOH Memorandum, the Aboriginal Health Policy Development Process, Appendix "C" Chronology of Events: Aboriginal Health Policy. Feb. 2, 1993.
41. IBID.
42. Minutes.
43. IBID.
44. Minutes. February 17-18, 1992. Meeting with the Aboriginal Organizations' on the Development of an Aboriginal Health Policy.
45. Announced at the Aboriginal Health Policy meeting, March 24, 1992. Minutes, p.1.
46. Minutes. Aboriginal Health Policy Meeting. March 24, 1992. Minutes, p.4.
47. Aboriginal Health Policy Meeting. September 9-10, 1992. Minutes, p.8. Aboriginal Health Policy Meeting. December 2, 1992. Minutes, p.3-4.
48. Aboriginal Health Policy Meeting. December 2, 1992. Minutes, p.5-8.
49. Memorandum to the Aboriginal organizations from Birthe Jorgensen, Director, Policy, Programs and Research Branch, MOH, January 29, 1993. Letters from the Union of Ontario Indians (February 2, 1993) and from the Ontario Native Women's Association (February 5, 1993) identify the issues of unilateral decision-making by the MOH and lack of support of Ministry bureaucrats for the Aboriginal Health Policy process.
50. Aboriginal Health Policy Meeting. April 19-20, 1993. Minutes, p.3-6.
51. Aboriginal Health Policy Retreat, September 23, 1994, Toronto. Minutes.
52. Aboriginal Health Policy Meeting. October 25-26, 1993. Minutes, p.5-6.
53. Cabinet Committee on Justice report, Meeting No.: J1/94, p. 6-7. January 20, 1994.
54. Aboriginal Health Policy Meeting, March 3-4, 1994, Thunder Bay. Minutes, p.3-5.



55. Letter by Hon. Bud Wildman, Minister of Native Affairs to the Hon. Ruth Grier, Minister of Health, April 7, 1994.
56. Aboriginal Health Policy Meeting, April 20-21, 1994, Chiefs of Ontario Office. Minutes.
57. Joint Meeting held April 20, 1994. Minutes.
58. 20th Annual All Ontario Chiefs' Conference, at the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, June 7 - 10, 1994. Resolution #94/26: Acceptance of a Final Draft of Aboriginal Health Policy.
59. Chiefs of Ontario. Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy, Chronological Summary of Meetings and Decisions. October 17, 1994.
60. Draft Agenda. Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy joint meeting. July 25-26, 1994. Toronto.
61. IBID.
62. IBID., September 12-13, 1994.
63. IBID., PPC meeting in London, Ont., September 14, 1994.
64. IBID., September 23, 1994.
65. IBID., September 28, 1994.
66. IBID., October 7, 1994.
67. IBID., October 12, 1994.
68. Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy Committee Meeting, October 6-7, 1994, Toronto. Minutes.
69. October 21, 1994.
70. Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy meeting, November 2-3, 1994. Minutes.



Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy

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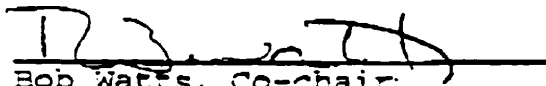
INFORMATION ON THE STUDY

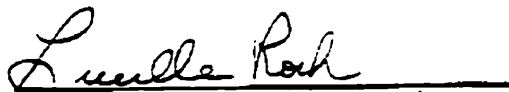
The Joint Steering Committee of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy is interested in documenting and analyzing how the strategy was designed and developed. As an innovative exercise in joint policy development, the study will focus on the design and development phases of the Strategy from 1988 to 1994. It will examine the development processes of both the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy and the Aboriginal Health Policy. As an historical review, this study will complement other research which will evaluate the implementation of the Strategy, to be undertaken later this year.

For the purpose of this study, the Joint Steering Committee is interested in understanding the views of participants and key informants who were involved in the earlier stages. We want to examine the structural and organizational features of the process, the key events which occurred, the cultural practices involved, the working relationships among participants and what people learned from their participation in the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy.

This research will be used to write a report on the design and development of the strategy which will be available to the public. The information gathered will also be used for a doctoral thesis on selected aspects of the policy-making process of the strategy. Suzanne Dudziak is the principal researcher.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

  
Bob Watts, Co-chair  
Joint Steering Committee

  
Lucille Roch, Co-chair  
Joint Steering Committee

LETTER OF CONSENT

(to be signed by the respondent at the time of interview)

It has been explained to me that a study is being conducted by Suzanne Dudziak on behalf of the Joint Steering Committee of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy. The purpose of the study is to review, document, and analyze the process that led to the development and approval of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy. The information from my interview will be used for a written report available to the public and for a doctoral thesis.

My participation will involve answering some questions in an audio-taped interview which will last between 60 and 90 minutes in length. Before the interview, I understand that I will be asked to review a brief chronology of the events concerning the development of the Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy and the Aboriginal Health Policy which led to formation of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy. During the interview I will be asked for some background about my involvement with the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy, my experiences during that involvement, and my reflections about the design and development of the Strategy.

I understand that this interview is confidential and at no time will my name be used in connection with this study. Access to full transcripts will be restricted to the principal researcher. However, to minimize the misinterpretation of information and bias, access to parts of transcripts will be made available on an anonymous basis to members of the Research and Review Working Group for the purpose of checking the principal researcher's coding and analysis. Members of this group have signed a form pledging confidentiality.

For the purpose of the written report, thesis, and any other publications resulting from this study, I wish to be identified as \_\_\_\_\_ . I understand that I am participating freely on a voluntary basis, that I may refuse to answer any questions I do not wish to answer, and that I may speak off the record. I also understand that I will be given a written transcript of this interview and will have two weeks to make any changes I wish to make to the transcript before it is coded and analyzed.

Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**BASIC INFORMATION**

1. During the years 1990 to 1994, which policy process/es were you involved with and for what period of time?

a) Aboriginal Family Healing Strategy

(month, year/s) from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

b) Aboriginal Health Policy

(month, year) from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

c) Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy  
(July, 1994 - December 1994)

(month, year) from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

2. What organization/ministry did you represent during that time (if you changed jobs/organizations, please specify)?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. During that time, what position/office did you hold in your organization/ministry?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you.

**OATH OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

(to be signed by members of the Research and Review Working Group)

In order to protect the integrity of the individuals and organizations involved in this study on the design and development of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy, I affirm that any information pertaining to the transcripts of interviews and focus groups will remain confidential.

Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

LETTER OF CONSENT

(to be signed by participants at the time of the focus group)

It has been explained to me that a study is being conducted by Suzanne Dudziak on behalf of the Joint Steering Committee of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy. The purpose of the study is to review, document, and analyze the process that led to the development and approval of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy. The information from my participation in the focus group will be used for a written report available to the public and for a doctoral thesis.

I understand the possible risks and benefits associated with participating in this study. I have been assured of confidentiality and anonymity in any written documents relating to this study.

I agree to have the focus group session tape-recorded but if I wish to withdraw my comments from the study, I may do so. I may also choose to speak off the record at any time during the focus group session.

I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary and that it is my decision whether or not to participate. I further understand that I may withdraw my participation from the study at any time.

I hereby consent to participate.

Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

PRAYER OF THE DIRECTIONS

O Great Spirit, Father of all creation:  
We thank you for bringing us together  
On our journey around the Medicine Wheel  
That we may exist in balance of spirit, mind and body.  
That we may function in harmony with all that is around us.  
We give thanks for the gifts from the directions:

EAST:

We give thanks for the gifts of vision, guidance and leadership.  
May we be like the eagle: to fly high and see far  
As we watch and guard the well-being of the Anishinabe.  
May we see situations clearly and always lend a helping hand.  
May we listen and be a true leader: provide service.

SOUTH:

WE give thanks for the gifts of love, trust, and discipline.  
May we be like the rose and learn to LOVE and to treat with LOVE:  
To LISTEN, to OVERLOOK the negative and be positive, to VOICE,  
communicate; and to make an EFFORT to do something for others.  
May we be determined to fulfill our purpose  
And achieve the goals that we have set.

WEST:

We give thanks for the gifts of introspection and perseverance.  
May we be like the turtle, to go within, to see from within  
That we may accept ourselves as we really are.  
May we be like the bear to have the strength to pursue the  
challenge of achieving the highest level of care.

NORTH:

We give thanks for wisdom, understanding: gifts of the intellect.  
May we be like the buffalo and be strong.  
May we think clearly to make good decisions balanced by reason.  
May we learn how things fit together and see reflections of life.  
May we learn to live balanced lives.

MOTHER EARTH:

We give thanks for the gift of life.  
We give thanks for the provisions of our every need:  
The plants for food and medicine.  
The trees for shelter, protection, warmth.  
May we always respect these and use only what we need.

FATHER SKY:

We give thanks for the gifts of the sun; light, life, warmth .  
We give thanks for those things that we need to be in harmony  
with our environment: the rains, the snow and the sleet.

For all gifts we say MEEGWETCH, MEEGWETCH, MEEGWETCH, MEEGWETCH.

- Rosella Kinoshamez -