

**Healing Sheshatshit:
Innu Identity and Community Healing**

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ABSTRACT

Community healing is an issue of great importance today in many Native communities across Canada, and yet the concept goes largely undiscussed by medical anthropologists who have instead traditionally focused on the 'ethnomedicine' and poor health conditions of these communities. For Innu of Sheshatshit, Labrador, community healing involves much more than mending physical ailments. Healing signifies a move towards new social meaning and coherence and is a forum for negotiating Innu identity. This thesis attempts to redress this gap in the literature by describing the deeply nuanced meanings community healing takes on in community discourse and its implications for contemporary Innu identity. Additionally, this account explores the significance of nostalgia for the past and of country space in community discourse as it relates to community healing.

RÉSUMÉ

De plus en plus, le *community healing* devient un sujet d'une importance capitale au sein des groupes autochtones du Canada. Pourtant, au lieu d'examiner ce concept de manière critique, la littérature en anthropologie médicale a continué à centrer son attention sur "l'ethnomédecine" et sur les conditions de vie pénibles dans les communautés amérindiennes. Chez les Innus de Sheshatshit, Labrador, la notion de *healing* renvoie à quelque chose de plus profond que le traitement de problèmes de santé: à un moyen de mettre en place un nouveau champ de significations sociales et de renforcer la cohésion de la communauté ainsi qu'à un forum de négociation de l'identité Innu. Cette thèse explore la notion de *community healing*, sa portée par rapport à l'identité Innu collective et individuelle; elle essaie également de dégager les principales dimensions de cette notion. De plus, cette thèse examine la portée de la nostalgie par rapport au passé et à l'espace (*country space*) dans le discours de Sheshatshit vis-à-vis du concept de *community healing*.

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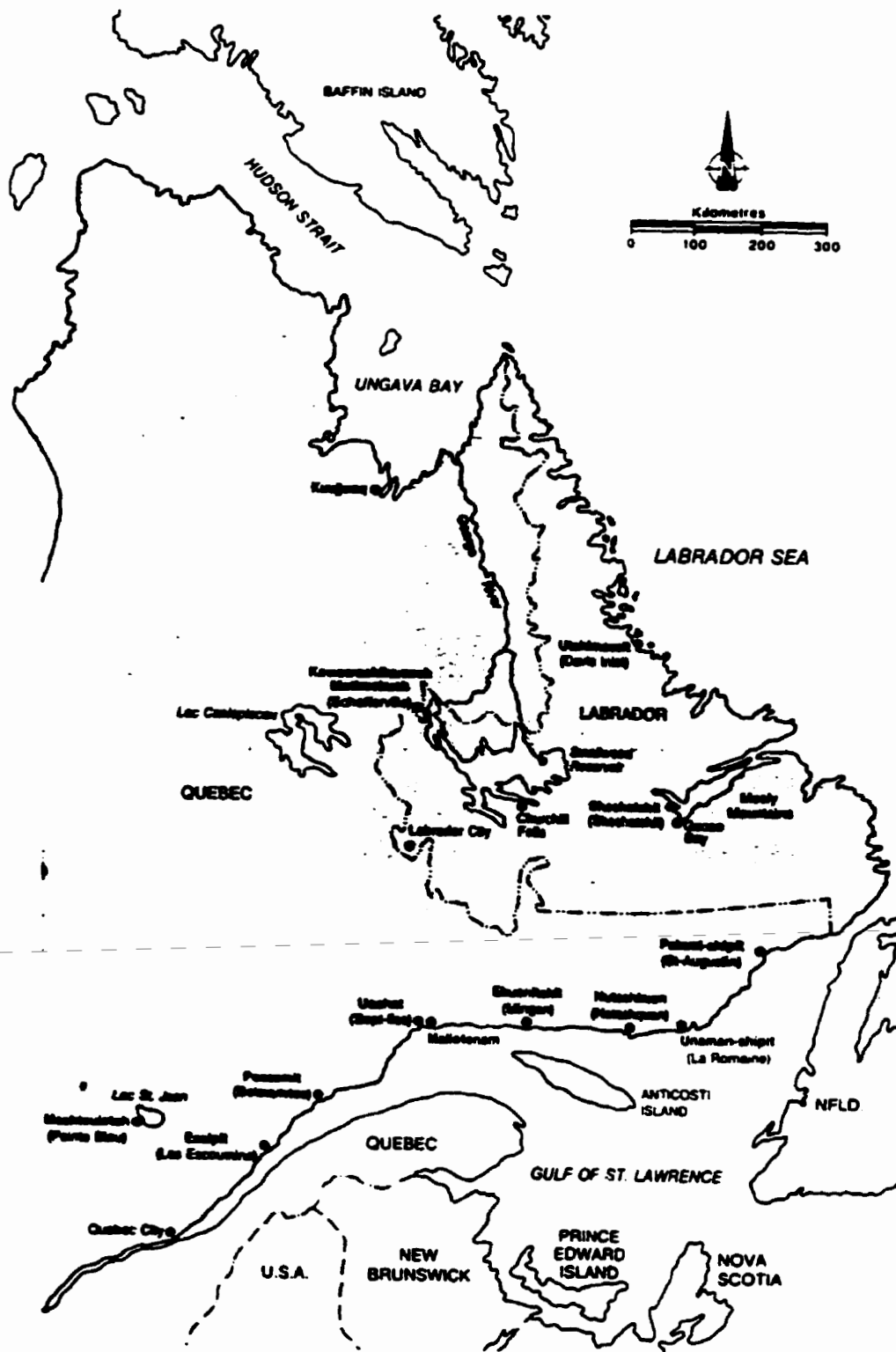
Finally, I would like to thank my family that has seen me through this and so much more. Thank you Dad and Vikki, John, Sherry, Anita, Hugh, and Jen.

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Map of the Quebec-Labrador Peninsula
 Source: Wadden 1991:2

INTRODUCTION

While conducting preliminary research for this thesis, I was struck by the tensions between what I was reading in “the literature” and what I was learning about by word of mouth from researchers with experience in Native communities. Most of the research done on “healing” and “health” in Aboriginal communities focuses either on the poor health status of Native peoples, emphasizing the disproportionately high incidences of mortality, suicide, infant mortality, alcohol abuse and substance abuse found in Native populations (see for example Bagley 1991; Brady 1971; Jarvis and Boldt 1982; Trovato 1991; Wotten 1985; T.Young 1984, 1994) or on ethnomedicine, “traditional medicine”, and “shamanism” (see for example Descent 1986; Fortuine 1985; Hultkrantz 1985; Jilek 1982; Malloch 1989; Morse et al 1991; D.Young 1989). In contrast, when I raised the subject of traditional medicine (my initial research interest) with members of the Sheshatshit community and with several researchers working with Native groups, conversation often turned instead to the concept of “community healing” or “healing”¹, a salient issue today in many Native communities across Canada². The works mentioned above share a common conceptual point of departure, understanding “healing” to mean

¹Initially, I distinguished between these two terms. Upon reflection, I believe that they are used in relatively synonymous ways in Sheshatshit, with the distinction that “healing” is used more often to refer to an individual’s health (both physical and emotional) and that “community healing” is used to talk more about the communal path towards health as a social body. I will use both these terms through the course of this thesis, while trying to respect their nuanced differences.

²The recent Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples sponsored a National Round Table on Aboriginal Health and Social Issues, published as The Path to Healing (1993b). The thoughts expressed at these meetings by a wide range of both Native and non-Native people involved in health development and delivery in Native communities across Canada confirm the extreme relevancy and importance of community healing today, as well as the wide range of local approaches to it. See also the published public hearings of the Royal Commission (1993a) that identify “personal and collective *healing* for Aboriginal peoples and communities” (1993a:3; emphasis in original) as one of four central themes emerging throughout the public hearings. Given the general lack of resources available on the topic of community healing, these publications (and others written by community organizations themselves) are illuminating. However, terms such as “community healing”, “community well-being”, and “a healing perspective” remain unproblematized in these documents, leaving them as undefined concepts. This thesis attempts to fill this gap.

curative practices for physical ailments. In comparison, the contemporary sense of “community healing” in many Aboriginal communities entails a much wider sense of the word “healing”, one that very little published scholarly work has yet considered³. This piqued my curiosity: voluminous amounts have been written about Native peoples in Canada, yet this highly relevant, widespread, and current topic of discussion in Native communities had as yet been largely neglected by scholars.

“Community healing”

Community healing especially appealed to me as a topic of inquiry for two reasons: initial conversations I shared with members of the Sheshatshit community showed it to be of growing importance to them; additionally, studying it offered a chance to highlight the positive initiatives arising internally in a Native community and geared towards addressing difficult social problems, rather than perpetuating the negative image of a Native community in decline and despair. I began this project by asking ‘what does it mean to heal a community?’ This question led to others and gradually expanded to include: how are people addressing such difficult social problems? Who is involved in this process? What are the differing levels of discourse among community members in Sheshatshit about community healing? How does community healing relate to larger root issues such as the continual re-negotiation of cultural identity?

I was fortunate enough to spend three months during the spring and summer of 1995 in Sheshatshit, Labrador, an Innu community of about 1,000 people, exploring these issues. Innu of Sheshatshit are searching for effective and appropriate ways to reorder lives that have been profoundly disrupted by rapid cultural change compounded by both substance abuse and family violence. Healing for many Innu people I spoke with has come to signify a move towards new social meaning and coherence, and towards

³One extremely current exception to this trend is Fajber (1996).

regaining control of Innu lives by addressing the acute social problems that face the community. Healing in this context goes far deeper than mending and medicating physical hurts. It also speaks to the residue of colonialism and its terrible effects on the morale and self-confidence of many Native people who have for generations struggled against racism and assimilation. Community healing is in part a network of social service programmes geared towards helping community members mend lives and family fabric damaged by abuse and violence. Community healing is also a forum for talking about a history of colonialism and assimilation, the profound pain stemming from them, and for looking towards a better future while instilling and affirming pride in being a Native person in the present. This is not to say that community members are moving as one on these issues, nor that each individual person in the community is eager to “heal”. Opinions in Sheshatshit about community healing vary widely, and it is not my intention to attempt a bounded definition of healing for Innu in this thesis. Instead, I offer one perspective on community healing that has been deeply informed by both my initial questions and then by my impressions, associations, and experiences once in the community. Another point of entry would have no doubt differently nuanced my understanding of community healing and its place in Sheshatshit today, for as writers such as Clifford (1988), Crapanzano (1992), and Marcus and Fischer (1986) have made clear, there is no neutrality in ethnography. Furthermore, I must emphasize that I am circumscribing my investigation here to *contemporary* concepts of community healing and the internal community debates as they were described to me and appeared to me during my time in Sheshatshit. Tracing the development of the concept of community healing and possible traces of it historically in Innu nomenclature are beyond the scope of this project.

Going in country

The day after my arrival in Sheshatshit, I was having a conversation with a man in the community with whom I had spoken a few times before and who was familiar with my

interest in community healing. We began to speak of healing and of my research. Two things he said during the course of this discussion stuck in my mind: "People's way of thinking is different when out in the country...people are healthier" and "the healing for the Innu, I think, is in the country". Going "in country" (or *mutshimit* in *Innu-aimun*) means going to live on the land with one's family in hunting and fishing camps for a period of two or three months in the spring or autumn, living in tents and away from the community. Recently, more and more families have been going in country again, after a period of time when fewer were making the trip. During the spring of 1995, almost half the community went in country. But this man also told me that it has been eight or nine years since he had spent time out in country, and that he feels guilty about not having been out more recently. Even so, this yearning he expressed had not been forceful enough for him to leave the community with his family and go in country. In subsequent discussions with other community members, similar and related themes emerged: the importance of being in country but also the difficulty of escaping the community; the emphasis on how different life is when away from the community; how people always have things to do when in country; how alcohol is no longer important to people when they go in country. Why were people talking to me about being in country when I had asked them about community healing?

Life in the community

I found Sheshatshit to be a place of great contrasts...a place with people also just living their lives, and not talking explicitly about wanting to 'heal' themselves. Sheshatshit is fully "modernized"- people live in houses, drive cars and pick-ups, listen to CBC Morningside, watch "The Fresh Prince of Bel Air" and "Bay Watch" on TV, eat pork chops, meat loaf, and pizza; go dancing to the same kind of music in Goose Bay as is played on CKOI 96.9 and MIX 96 in Montreal. And yet, half the houses were empty when I first arrived...many people were still out in country at their spring hunting camps,

and would not return for another three weeks. The little boy in the family I lived with wore moccasins made by his grandmother from caribou skin and sinew. Everyone spoke *Innu-aimun*⁴ with each other. There was a deep-freezer in the basement stuffed with salmon, caribou legs, a caribou head, and *mina* berries; there were beaver pelts drying in the basement and one stored under my mattress to keep it flat; four or five pairs of snowshoes made by hand were stored waiting for winter; hunting rifles were carefully wrapped and stored in the basement rafters; bolts of white tent canvas were for sale at the Innu cultural school; fresh salmon and trout flooded into the house from both the grandfather and great-uncle's nets in July; the occasional rabbit or partridge found its way to the dinner table; and people talked to me about wishing they could go to a tent in the woods to spend the night...the way the carpet of pine boughs laid on the tent floor would smell; the warmth of the wood stove; the sounds of the lake. And then, blaring radio intruded, or it was time to put a new load of laundry into the washing machine, or the phone rang, or somebody was at the front door, wanting a cigarette. Sheshatshit might have looked at first like any other small, disadvantaged rural town, but clearly it was different.

Something else that struck me forcibly was the endless stream of stories about tragic deaths that people recounted to me: suicides in the community, both attempted and 'successful'; accidental deaths by gunshot or drowning; children neglected by parents and other family members because all the adults in the household were drinking; accidents incurred while drinking ("yeah, there was a time I used to drink three-12's⁵ and then a bottle of hard stuff all by myself....then one night I blew my side out with a shot-gun after drinking..."); deaths incurred by drinking ("I've lost two sisters who died because of alcohol: one drowned, the other choked on her own vomit; a brother-in-law who died

⁴*Innu-aimun* is the Innu language, classified by social scientists as part of the Algonquian language family.

⁵Three twelve-packs of beer

after drinking; a young nephew who shot himself while drinking; three people in the family have broken their legs while drunk, and one broke his ankle..."). At first, I thought these were isolated incidents, tragic and horribly sad, but that they must be (or so I reassured myself), few and far between. However, as the number of stories increased, I began to realize that almost *everyone* had stories like them to tell: about friends, about cousins, about the people next door; "that guy" walking by on the road; "that woman's" daughter, a friend in Utshimassit, a niece in Quebec; oneself. I became overwhelmed by the stories and at each new telling, and more and more profoundly disturbed, especially at the way they were recounted -- as if the teller was describing a painting of the scene. All the details of life and of an individual involved were there, but in a detached way as one would look at a picture *imitating* life but not in itself living. It was as if every time a story was told I felt myself shrink from the terror, feeling the pain -- my heart would start pumping faster, my stomach would knot; but the person telling the story appeared non-plussed, as if this were not anything extraordinary -- certainly not enjoyable, but not cause for alarm, either. Then as time went on, I realized that I too had begun to react in a different way as the stories of death, tragedy, accident, and abuse continued to emerge. They were no longer out of the realm of "everyday", of "normal". They had become a current in my life, something that underlay every new day, every acquaintance that I made. I knew the stories and pain were there, spoken or not, the ghosts and the ghosts to be. There was a certain atmosphere in the community, a *feeling* of waiting, of anticipation, of *knowing* that it was simply a matter of time until the next tragedy struck. It was a feeling that I denied and pushed back for as long as possible, but it was undeniably there in the community, lurking.

Life at the campsite

Then, I left the community to spend a weekend with my host family away from Sheshatshit. The family I stayed with lives together in their house during the winter, but

had room for me in the summer because the grandparents camp out at a site about five miles from Sheshatshit on a different part of Lake Melville. It was here that I first saw and experienced the differences between community life and life *away* from the community. I had been camping when I was younger with my parents in state parks in New England, in a tent, with a Coleman cooler, Tang orange drink, and cooking over a propane stove, but this was different. It was not just a family vacation. This campsite was the grandparent's true home. Here they felt relaxed and safe, away from the community, camping on the shores of the lake. The days were full and busy: taking walks looking for ducks, geese, or partridge depending on which direction one began walking, either towards the marsh and lake or towards the woods; collecting pine boughs for the tent floor or for Matinen's⁶ large cooking hearth outside. She was always bustling about at her hearth: baking or cooking breads, stews, and doughnuts; cleaning and preparing animals there; washing dishes or making tea. Her husband was constantly chopping wood, checking nets, collecting bark for the fires. The baby of the family demanded a lot of attention as most 18 month olds do, especially as he learned to walk that summer, and whatever baby-sitting I could do was always more than welcome. The weekends I spent like this were some of the best of my life and from the discussions we had about it, the family had always felt the same way about camping there, too.

Most Saturday or Sunday afternoons the extended family would trickle down to visit for an hour or two; it was a chance for them to get away from Sheshatshit, to enjoy some of Matinen's country cooking, and to visit with family members. Later on, her husband's two brothers and their families also put up their tents and stayed through the end of June and July. The feeling at this camp was wholly different from that of community life, but at the time was not one I could articulate well at all. But slowly, bits and pieces began to come together as I talked to people more and more about healing,

⁶I have changed all proper names to pseudonyms throughout this text.

about life in the community, about the pain they had experienced, and about being in country.

Preliminary landmarks

It is within this context of contrast between community and country that I situate community healing because the contrast represents a number of issues critical to appreciating the significance of community healing in Sheshatshit. Firstly, Innu people have experienced dramatic cultural upheaval and change in the past forty or fifty years: living circumstances and priorities have shifted from self-sufficient nomadism linked with some activity in the fur trade only two generations ago to settlement and assimilation into a cash-based economy. This is due in part to the efforts of the Catholic missionaries and the provincial and federal government to assimilate Innu by suppressing Innu culture, resulting in social upheaval and chaos. Without this colonial history, there would be no need for community healing of the nature we are discussing today.

Secondly, this colonial experience is not unique to the Innu, but is repeated multiple times throughout Canada. Thirdly, within the past twenty years there has been a powerful movement among Aboriginal groups in Canada towards self-determination and the assertion of Aboriginal rights. This arose in concurrence with movements like Black Power, Red Power, the American Indian Movement (AIM) in the United States and the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) in Canada during the 1970's that triggered a surge of Native American pride throughout North America. In Canada, this movement was particularly solidified by the White Paper of 1969, a piece of proposed legislation that helped to unify a Native response to a colonial-minded federal government and fostered a new activism among many Native people on both sides of the border, no longer able to stand passively by and watch their lives be controlled by outside forces (see also Crow Dog 1990; Levin 1993; Richardson 1989).

Native peoples of Canada have been engaged in a series of political and legal steps towards re-claiming control over their own communities, lands, resources, and ways of life, and community healing is a crucial element of this process for many Native groups, Innu among them. As Mercredi and Turpell write, self-government is “an end to the dominance of one group of people over another...it is a beginning, not a solution” (1993: 247) but one that equates self-government with self-respect, self-esteem, and “the future for our distinct cultures and identities” (ibid:245) and emphasizes “...the profoundly spiritual nature of the movement for the recognition of First Nations rights and the *healing* of First Nations peoples” (ibid:41; emphasis added). It is under these general conditions that discourse about community healing has begun to emerge in many Native communities in Northern Canada and I argue that it is within this general historical framework that this development must be situated in order to be understood.

Furthermore, in Sheshatshit, the discourse surrounding community healing has become linked with going in country which in turn is the epitome of Innu identity for many people. Being in country emerged again and again in my discussions with people as a crucial element of Innu identity and as a “place of healing”. There, people could rise above the daily circumstances they encounter while in the community and be in country instead, on the land, where the pace of life and daily concerns are geared towards Innu knowledge and skills. Some people described to me how being in country was a way of living as their ancestors had “for thousands of years” before; a way of escaping the chronic boredom of the community and its underlying tensions, and being instead out in the woods where every day brought something new and challenging and a sense of accomplishment; a way of affirming pride in being Innu and being Native.

As much as being in country and issues of identity emerged in conversations about community healing, people also talked to me about healing specifically in terms of the social problems individuals were addressing, such as abuse and alcoholism. In this context, the emphasis was often placed on the intervention programmes and support systems within

the community geared towards addressing these problems and what is being done "to heal" the community. At first I thought that people were talking about different things, but then I began to see that there was no simple dichotomy between healing as being in country and healing as intervention programmes -- it was as if the discourses were circling in orbits around and through each other, connecting at certain points, and swinging away at others, only to be reunited again in an endless spiral. Other themes about community healing that emerged from these circlings included knowing one's history and roots as Innu; notions of healing as grieving; of healing as confrontation and as "talking". All of these orbiting discourses are integral parts of what community healing means and signifies to Innu people in Sheshatshit today. I could never hope to encapsulate the notion of "healing" for Innu as it is such a fluid and individualized concept. Rather, in the following pages, I will attempt to describe these orbits of discourse on healing and offer my reading, one perspective, on what is currently transpiring in Sheshatshit as people live their lives and try to address the problems in their community.

CHAPTER ONE

Theoretical and methodological considerations

Community healing

Kayleen Hazlehurst has written about "personal and community healing...[and] indigenous visions for community recovery" (1994:xi) based on her experiences with Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Hazlehurst documents similar social and historical conditions for these groups as are seen in Sheshatshit -- alcoholism, inter-personal conflict, "historic grievance and loss, and the sense of powerlessness and frustration which they arouse...turned inward. Many communities display the classic symptoms of internalised oppression -- despair, shame, and self-loathing, alienation, self-destructive behaviours and recurrent violence against close relatives..." (ibid:18) and Hazlehurst notes how "aggressive and self-destructive behaviours ruin social relations and erode human trust" (ibid:25). Hazlehurst emphasizes the elements of empowerment and regaining control inherent in the process of community healing (which she alternately refers to as "community regeneration" and "community recovery"): "taking responsibility for community problems as a means of taking back control of community life" (ibid:51). She also recognizes that "the concepts of 'healing' and 'community re-empowerment' have become intrinsic to the process of achieving self-determination" (ibid:46) and she clearly portrays the influence of "Canadian Indian" approaches to addressing family violence and addictions in their own communities on Australian Aboriginal programmes.

Hazlehurst's account is helpful in that it introduces some general themes surrounding community healing and its increasingly international/interindigenous nature⁷.

⁷O'Neil also emphasizes the "international collaboration between Aboriginal societies to confront common health concerns" (1993:28) such as Canadian First Nations' representatives working with the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress "to develop community-controlled alcohol treatment centres" (ibid:27) and the "international Healing the Spirit Worldwide conference, held in Edmonton in July 1992, which drew more than 3500 Aboriginal participants from 14 countries (including a delegation of 150 Aborigines from Australia)" (ibid:28), and states that "these First People consultations are without doubt the most

It also confirms the links between self-determination, identity, and community healing. However, the questions of what community healing signifies for the various levels of social life, what community re-empowerment "means", and why community healing has emerged at this particular moment in Australia go unasked in her text. As mentioned in the Introduction, one issue that prompted this thesis was the distinct lack of literature concerning the concept of community healing. The terms "community healing" and "healing" do emerge tantalizingly from time to time in the bodies of various texts, but the authors who use them often do not directly explain them. However, the context in which they are utilized does reveal several themes relevant to this thesis. For example, Henriksen, while outlining current social and economic concerns of Utshimassit (Davis Inlet) community members and leaders, makes a brief reference to community healing:

a main conclusion in this article is that in order for the [Mushuau] Innu to be able to release their innovative potential, and create a richer economic basis for their community, they must go through *a process of healing, both as individuals and as a community*. It is crucial to this process that they gain greater control over their own community and the running of its various institutions...the Mushuau Innu perceive themselves as a people with a culture and a history of their own, and...such a perception is an integral part of the leaders' strategies to heal and rebuild their community. (1994:3; emphasis added)

This paragraph in many ways summarizes the issues Henriksen addresses in the rest of this text: community healing for Mushuau Innu, like Sheshatshit Innu, is intimately linked to self-determination ("greater control over their own community") and to Innu identity ("such a perception is an integral part...to heal and rebuild"). Although Henriksen does not develop these ideas any further as they relate to community healing nor does he explore the concept of "healing" beyond this initial point, we see reflected in

significant contemporary initiative in the Aboriginal health arena" (ibid:28). Two other examples of similar conferences are the "Communities in Crisis: Healing Ourselves", a conference on family violence and alcohol abuse in Native communities held in Montreal, June 6-8, 1991 and the "National Forum Report: Re-Integration of the Ex-Offender in First Nations Communities" held in Montreal, November 17-18, 1994. The Waseskun House program helped sponsor both conferences and has published reports of both on its website at <http://www.infobahnos.com/~waseskun/programs.html>

his account the concepts introduced by Hazlehurst -- a social context of difficult living conditions that community healing addresses and the social and political empowerment that is linked with healing and rebuilding.

Two other authors, John D. O'Neil (1993; 1994) and Naomi Adelson (1992), have begun to examine the concept of community healing in their work in a more critical fashion. O'Neil participated in the National Round Table on Aboriginal Health and Social Issues sponsored by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People and published a discussion paper in the Commission's report (O'Neil:1993). His paper focuses on the development of Aboriginal health policies and the increasingly involved role Aboriginal communities are taking in their own health care planning. It is within this context that he raises the issue of community healing. He considers western medicine to have had a "colonizing impact...on Aboriginal society" (ibid:36) and sees a shift in health issues within Aboriginal communities as many communities are starting to initiate their own programmes centring on local priorities: "there is also an expanded interest in 'health' as opposed to the 'sickness profiles' common to mainstream epidemiology. Issues such as family violence, addictions, and mental and spiritual health are fundamental rather than secondary concerns" (ibid:35). Although he does not explicitly state that these are the very issues that community healing centres around, it is implied within his text. O'Neil then goes on to discuss both the Canadian government's health care transfer initiative and the general principles of Aboriginal traditional medicine. The transfer initiative can be seen as a first step towards self-determination in health care and perhaps also towards a fruitful integration of traditional Aboriginal medicine and bio-medicine. According to O'Neil, this will ultimately contribute to community well-being as "Aboriginal communities across the country...are making huge progress against enormous odds on the problems that are most significant at the community level -- alcohol, domestic violence and child abuse" (ibid:44-5).

O'Neil's 1994 article, written in collaboration with Brian Postl, elaborates upon the dramatic potential of self-government to positively impact Aboriginal health and health care in Canada, and "the long-term expectation that self-government will be about more than politics, power and the administration of services. Fundamentally, it will also be about community well-being" (1994:67). The authors visualize self-government as a building block for social development which in turn "will contribute to improved health by supporting the healing process that is already under way in many Aboriginal communities" (ibid:67). O'Neil and Postl's approach is a politically situated one, and reinforces the importance of the context of Aboriginal health and self-determination in Canada for the concept of community healing. I hope to build upon the themes that O'Neil has drawn out by showing how community healing in Sheshatshit must also be understood within the greater context of a remobilization of Innu identity and by describing what healing means on an experiential level for people's daily lives.

Naomi Adelson's recent work with the Whapmagoostui Cree of eastern James Bay offers another perspective on community healing. The Whapmagoostui Cree are another Algonquian group linguistically related to, and culturally similar to, the Sheshatshit Innu. Adelson's approach to healing is a notable exception to the works discussed in the Introduction as she expands her understanding of the concept of healing to incorporate issues relating to both Cree identity and health. She explores the Cree concept of *miyupimaatisiun* which she translates as "being alive well", a term much more expansive than "health" or "healing" when used with only physical connotations. *Miyupimaatisiun* includes, among other things, "how one lives and interacts... 'being alive well' is being able to hunt, pursue traditional activities, live well in the bush (and) eat the right food" (1992:11). Additionally, *miyupimaatisiun* and the cultural practices that it includes becomes a way for Cree to distinguish themselves from non-Cree. It is "a form of cultural assertion, and as such, represents opposition to perceived threats to cultural continuity" (ibid:200); in order to maintain good health, one must also participate

in cultural activities that are distinctly Cree (ibid:236-7). Although Adelson does not directly address the topic of community healing, her work does portray the deep connection between health and identity in a Native community similar to Sheshatshit, as well as enlarge notions of "health" and "healing" beyond physical concerns to embrace issues of identity and social distinctiveness. What she proposes about the connections between "being alive well" and the assertion of Cree identity is also highly suggestive for Sheshatshit Innu. I shall expand upon her work in the course of this thesis by exploring how the discourse of community healing in Sheshatshit is intimately linked to issues of identity and being Innu.

These basic premises about community healing coming from Hazlehurst, O'Neil, and Adleson's work inform my own research. That is to say, the issues of community empowerment, the politics of Aboriginal health and self-determination, and a conceptualization of health that expands beyond the confines of physical conditions are all elements integral to a preliminary understanding of community healing. With this foundation in place, I propose a framework that centres around two main theoretical axes and intend to investigate if these analytical principles are sufficiently strong to account for the different dimensions of community healing in the particular context of Sheshatshit. The first axis comprises the social problems and social suffering of the community that have emerged within the past thirty years and stem from a colonial history. The second axis is the assertion of Innu cultural identity and a remobilization of pride in being Innu. This second axis is itself situated within the wider context of Aboriginal self-determination in Canada and then more specifically, within recent local political activism in Sheshatshit. Ultimately, it is at the point of intersection where suffering and identity come together that the strength and vital importance of community healing truly emerge.

Social suffering

Community healing is a multifaceted response to some extremely painful and serious issues that touch Sheshatshit community members on many levels. In a recent collection of essays on social suffering and structural violence, Kleinman, Das, and Lock call for an approach to such topics that understands how "forms of human suffering can be at the same time collective and individual...[and an approach that also describes] what is at stake in human experiences of political catastrophe and social structural violence" (1996:xii). These authors and the others writing on different aspects of social suffering in the same volume do not directly consider contemporary living conditions of Native groups, yet their work parallels my own as it covers many of the same conditions inherent in communities experiencing social trauma and severe social conditions⁸. Although my original research objective was to focus on positive community based programmes aimed at resolving community problems, I soon found that simply describing the underlying factors that made a move towards community healing necessary in the first place was by itself inadequate. In order to show the significance of community healing, it was absolutely essential to go beyond statistics and history and reach instead towards describing "what was at stake in [the] human experience". One principle that guided me through so much of the research was asking what do these conditions *mean* for people's lives? How are these experiences that are being recounted to me spread out over the different layers that compose this community? That is, in both my research and my writing, I have attempted always to remain attentive and sensitive to how "suffering...is experienced within nested contexts of embodiment: collective, intersubjective, individual" (ibid:xvii) in order to give a deeply nuanced account that represents the profound significance of community healing to many people in Sheshatshit.

⁸See An Antane Kapesh (1976) for a powerful account of the social suffering of Innu in Schefferville from the perspective of a woman living there.

In the same collection of essays, Farmer asks the question "by what mechanisms do social forces ranging from poverty to racism become embodied as individual experience?" (1996: 261-2). Clearly, this group of authors understands that social suffering permeates a multitude of layers that compose a community's fabric and touch it on all levels of social interaction: individual, interpersonal and collective. The issues facing Sheshatshit are also of this nature, and must be contextualized as such in order to be fully appreciated. Farmer goes further to suggest that recounting life stories and experiences is an effective way of truly portraying "the sharp, hard surfaces of individual suffering" (ibid:263), but that in order "to explain suffering, one must embed individual biography in the larger matrix of culture, history, and political economy" (ibid:272). I concur with Farmer that recounting life stories are a vivid way of communicating what this social violence is like on the phenomenological, lived level, and that at the same time the individual must also be situated historically and politically. However, I am not attempting to *explain* the suffering in Sheshatshit as much as I am attempting to make its poignancy felt, situate it within a historical context, look at what is being said and done on the community level to *address* the social suffering, and then examine the implications of this discourse.

Reappropriation of identity

Some people now, they are on their way to healing – it took a lot of courage to walk on the runway – you feel proud, that there's something you can do and feel proud of being a native person...Once you know you have strength, you can go kill caribou in Kanimesh when you aren't supposed to and [you can] go walk on the runway. (Grace, mid-forties)

Running alongside this axis of social pain that community healing is attempting to redress is the second axis of Innu identity. The emergence of community healing as an active discourse in Sheshatshit occurred in conjunction with a dramatic change in community politics. The community for many years "until the late 1970s...seemed to have

been overwhelmed by the impact of development, and unable to put up any effective resistance to this process" (Tanner 1993:77). However, throughout the late 1970's and into the 1980's, the Innu leadership in Sheshatshit became increasingly politicized. Tanner (1993) traces the growth of this development and examines it in light of the increase in Innu social isolation and marginalization from the surrounding non-Innu society, identifying it as a central contributing factor in the development of the "relatively extreme form of ethnic nationalism" (ibid:94) that flavours the political activity of the Innu Nation in comparison with other Native groups in Canada. Tanner, following the work on ethnic nationalism by political scientist Walker Connor (1973), also links the wider movement of First Nations' self-determination with a renewed sense of identity as Native people and situates Innu pride and identity within the larger context of this First Nations' pride and identity occurring throughout Canada:

The recent (re)assertion of Canadian indigenous peoples' nationalism and calls for autonomy does indeed...seem to have followed from the development of their self-conscious identity as a people. In the case of the aboriginal people of Labrador and to some degree among those in adjacent Quebec, this new identity has been marked, for example, by their insistence (starting around 1978) on being called 'Innu' instead of the previous labels applied to them of 'Montagnais' or 'Naskapi'. It also coincides with having their territory referred to as 'Nitassinan'⁹ (ibid:77-8)

Although Innu ethnonationalism and "self-conscious identity" began to emerge over a number of years and through different political leaders, it was the well documented Innu resistance to NATO low-level military training flights originating from the Goose Bay airbase that signalled a deep politicization of Sheshatshit community members. Due to historical factors that I elaborate upon in the following chapter, Innu of Labrador do not have registered federal or provincial Indian status, nor did they ever sign treaties with either government. As such, their homeland has never been ceded and the Innu Nation

⁹*Nitassinan* is a word in *Innu-aimun* that translates to "our land" in English. It is the traditional homeland of the Innu, spanning the Quebec-Labrador peninsula.

does not recognize "the authority that provincial and federal laws and courts assert over them and their lands" (ibid:76). However, NATO¹⁰ began training flights in 1980 (as well as constructing bombing ranges) over the Quebec-Labrador peninsula and Innu hunting territories without consulting the Innu Nation or conducting any environmental impact studies. As the flights take place at extraordinarily low altitudes (sometimes as low as 30 metres) and produce intensely loud noise without warning (Armitage and Kennedy 1989), their intrusion over Innu hunting camps has been extremely controversial and the impetus for an Innu civil disobedience campaign of protests and demonstrations. This is in part what Grace refers to above -- over a period of months, beginning in 1988, many Innu were "walking on the runway" in Goose Bay in large groups, preventing the NATO bombers from taking off and conducting training drills. Each time the protesters went on the runway, they were arrested and a number of protesters have had to pay fines or serve time in jail for their participation¹¹ in the demonstrations¹².

The other incident Grace refers to, "you can go kill caribou in *Kanimesh* when you aren't supposed to", is another element in the recent rise in Innu pride. By the 1950's, governmental game laws began to restrict hunting and fishing rights in Labrador, and by the 1970's, both Native and non-Native people were required by law to have hunting licenses, available only by lottery (Tanner 1993:83-4). This did not stop Innu from pursuing their traditional hunting, but it did mean that increasing numbers were arrested for hunting violations in country (ibid:84). A growing resentment toward these game laws erupted in the spring of 1987 when it was announced by the government that

¹⁰The NATO nations sponsoring training at the airbase in Goose Bay, Labrador and over Nitassinan include Germany, Holland, England, Italy, and France. The United States was for a time also training in Goose Bay, but has since ceased its activity there.

¹¹Although the majority of these runway occupations and protests took place between 1988 and 1993, the ramifications are still being felt in Sheshatshit. As recently as July 15, 1996, one of the political leaders of Sheshatshit was imprisoned for ten days after refusing to pay a \$250 fine that was assessed him by the Newfoundland-Labrador courts after being convicted on charges stemming from the occupation of Dutch F-16's during a runway protest on September 8, 1993.

¹²See Wadden (1991) for an excellent and highly detailed account of Innu protest actions against low-level flying.

the Mealy Mountain¹³ caribou herd, off-limits for a number of years, would be open for a limited hunt. Innu leaders and families decided to hunt and camp without the licenses and before the season opened as a way of showing their sovereignty over unceded land. The Mealy Mountains were traditional hunting and fishing grounds of a number of Sheshatshit families, and many Innu of all ages became involved in the "illegal" hunt even in the face of RCMP raids on both hunting camps and houses in Sheshatshit (Tanner 1993:83-5; Wadden 1991:93-5). A wide variety of sources, both internal and external, identify these two protest actions as defining episodes in the life of Sheshatshit. The community found issues it could rally around and concerns that unified it, and for many people this was an extremely empowering experience.

Nagel has written how political protest and mobilization are ways of reaffirming ethnic identity and pride, and about the effectiveness of relying on highly charged cultural symbols to highlight protesters' demands (1994:166). Both the NATO protests and the Mealy Mountains civil disobedience campaigns centred around the Innu right to maintain and nurture traditional ways of life, particularly the right to hunt caribou, a potent cultural signifier for Innu. By protesting and protecting their ability to continue such activities that are integral elements of Innu identity, Innu were also re-affirming their right to self-determination. Howard's work on ethnic identity in the Pacific with other aboriginal groups facing similar conditions speaks also to the situation in Sheshatshit:

At the heart of the issue is how the bases for cultural identity relate to peoples' attempts to control their own destinies. Indigenous social movements...represent...attempts by colonially subjugated peoples to regain some measure of control over their lives. The thrust towards self-determination remains strong in the postcolonial Pacific...cultural identity is an important part of this thrust, as Pacific peoples explore the most effective ways of balancing political potency in larger arenas against greater control of home communities. (1990:274-5)

¹³The Mealy Mountains are not far from Sheshatshit, located on the south shore of Lake Melville (see map, page v).

The politicization of Sheshatshit around low-level flying and game laws emerged from a deep frustration with the surrounding Euro-canadian population that would not listen to Innu concerns and opinions but that imposed its own policies that significantly impacted Innu lives. As in Howard's example, this civil disobedience campaign was centrally a move by Innu towards controlling Innu destiny. However, the implications of these protests reach beyond the political level. The protests also became a way to protect and assert Innu identity that is interwoven with the land that was being overflowed. Country space in community discourse is a "place of healing", a space with an almost mythic capacity to reanchor people and make them strong again. By defending the land, people were also defending their right to maintain this refuge, this space that is at the core of Innu identity.

The politicization of identity

"(there is) a current generation of 20-30 year olds who are put down by their parents and grandparents because they say the young people are acting like they are white and that being Innu is more than genetics. This hurts...there is a real struggle now of what 'innu-ness' is...and how can it be lived? How can it be strengthened?"

(Rita, late thirties) ¹⁴

"People always portrayed country as healing, healthy, as who we are as Innu, as healthy Innu" *(Noah, late twenties)*

The cultural construction of identity has received much anthropological attention.

Barth's early work on ethnic boundaries posited

¹⁴Although I feel that including an age is helpful for situating each individuals' commentary, providing the exact age raised issues of confidentiality as it could too easily jeopardize the anonymity of each participant. Consequently, the terms "early", "mid" and "late" refer to the following range (taking the thirties as an example): 30-33 refers to the early thirties, 34-36 to the mid-thirties, and 37-39 to the late thirties. However, in recognition that each individual's status within a community will influence her or his position on various issues, I have compiled a brief, global sketch of the people I interviewed for this thesis in an attempt to balance the confidentiality of these participants with a certain amount of clarity for the reader. The composition of the people I interviewed is as follows: 45% are women, 55% are men; 23% are 25 years old or younger, 68% are between the ages of 26 and 50, and 10% are over 50 years old; 41% were not working for any of the social programs in Sheshatshit; 18% were Healing Services workers; 18% worked for social programs sponsored by the Innu Nation other than Healing Services; 14% were active in local politics; and 9% were working for Social Services.

social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained *despite* changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories...ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of social interaction and acceptance, but are quite to the contrary often the very foundations on which embracing social systems are built (1969:10; emphasis in original)

More recently, Clifford has proposed that our very way of understanding culture and cultural change has prejudiced our definitions of identity and he wonders what might change if we structured our questions differently:

What if identity is conceived *not as a boundary* to be maintained *but as a nexus of relations* and transactions actively engaging a subject? The story or stories of interaction must then be more complex, less linear and teleological...how do stories of contact, resistance, and assimilation appear from the standpoint of groups in which exchange rather than identity is the fundamental value to be sustained? (1988:344; emphasis added)

Poyer's work in Micronesia supports Clifford's: "Sapwuahfik personal identity is hierarchically nested, situationally variable, and potentially changeable over a person's lifetime" (1990:127). Theoretical perceptions about the cultural construction of identity have shifted from boundaries to interactions; identity is understood now not as neatly pigeon-holed but instead as organic, mutable, and even situationally dependent; not as "a thing but a process" (Sollors 1989:xv). Jenkins (1994) has further elaborated upon these points by demonstrating the mutual and reciprocal influence of external and internal factors on the processes of social identity. Personal and collective identities are "nested" or experienced on the individual, interpersonal and collective levels of social interaction; identity is now conceptualized as fluid, changeable, variable and no longer limited to the premise of "discrete categories" that underlie Barth's valuable early contribution.

Given all this, the question still remains as to what identity "is". Howard has described identity as "cultural ways of characterizing similarities and differences" (1990:271), and Friedman understands identity as emerging from "common experiences of the world [that unite as well as]...similarity of community forms, socialization, language

and sociality" (1992:205). Thus, we can conceptualize identity as a series of meaningful social characteristics that a person or a group refers to in order to indicate its place in the world. Furthermore, the assertion of identity and the symbols used to represent it can be seen as a political act.

Over the years, these processes as manifested in Native American communities have garnered considerable attention¹⁵. Cornell indicates how

...increasingly for large numbers of Indians, Indian identity -- as distinct from tribal identity -- has become a conscious and important basis of action and thought in its own right. A host of 'American Indian' and 'Native American' organizations testify to its salience, as do the numerous cooperative political efforts by Indian groups and organizations on behalf of both tribal and supratribal interests (1988:107)

Additionally, "whereas in previous years supratribal activity had been limited largely to regional tribal alliance or to religious and cultural activity, in the present century Indian identity joined tribal identity as a basis for *political action* on a large scale" (ibid:108;emphasis added). This "politicization of cultural identity" (Howard 1990:274) is a salient feature of contemporary Native community life. However, identity is always defined in a context of interaction with other peoples. Although "the growth of Native organizations and movements is helping Natives to retain their culture and identity and is reinforcing links among Natives all over Canada...(and) the pan-Indian movement emphasizes the values and beliefs central to the culture of Canadian Natives" (Frideres 1993:316), the particular identity Innu choose to accentuate will depend on the particular social context. On an external level vis-à-vis confrontation with the dominant society, the "common experiences of the world" that Friedman refers to as inspiring the emergence of a common identity would be more likely to prompt the Innu assertion of a "Native" identity and help forge links with other indigenous groups. However, on a local level the

¹⁵See for example Braroe 1975; Hertzberg 1971; Salisbury 1986; Sider 1993; Stymeist 1975; and Tanner (ed) 1983.

negotiation of identity becomes more a matter of defining what is Innu in the face of pan-Indianism.

As Sollors posits, identity is "a process" and not "a thing...but...the result of interactions" (1989: xv,xix). In Sheshatshit, some of what has been born with political action, fueled in part by Innu (internal) forces and supra-tribal (external) forces, is a revindication of Innu identity and an empowerment that is linked with community healing. As an important corollary to empowerment and the assertion of identity, I turn to Fischer (1986) who has pointed to the potential of ethnic identities for renewal: "Ethnicity is a process of inter-reference between two or more cultural traditions, and...these dynamics of intercultural knowledge provide *reservoirs for renewing* humane values. Ethnic memory is thus, or ought to be, *future*, not past, oriented" (1986 201; emphasis added). In Sheshatshit, political activity, identity, and community healing have all developed within a 'dynamic of intercultural knowledge' and influence; their import is that they offer a source of strength, a reservoir of sorts, that is enabling Innu to strategically recreate and redefine "Innu-ness" in the facing of troubling community problems. However, alongside this socio-political dimension of identity linked with self-determination and community empowerment, there is equally a revindication of identity occurring on the individual level. Social suffering is a violence that attacks individuals at the core of their being, destabilizing their entire social world of reference. In such a context, the personal empowerment associated in community discourse with healing is another form of identity renewal. However in this case, it is on the level of the individual, seeking to regain control over the conditions of her or his own life.

Methodological issues

This thesis is based on both library research and fieldwork, with my experience in the community heavily weighted over the former. During the three months that I spent in Sheshatshit I conducted twenty-one interviews with community members. Interviews

formed an important segment of my stay in Sheshatshit as they offered the opportunity to ask questions circling around the themes of healing, treatment programmes and intervention; however, far more valuable was simply living in the community. It is this constant contact that is a crucial underpinning of anthropology and for me as I tried to come to an understanding of the many interwoven levels of "healing" and what it means to both individuals and to the community.

Because I was living with one particular family, I undoubtedly became associated with them in the minds of many people in the community. It is not unlikely that this both facilitated and hampered my contact with other individuals and families in the community, and perhaps affected the impressions of priorities and values I have of people in the Sheshatshit. Additionally, a large percentage of people I interviewed are working in social health care delivery and intervention programmes and active in community affairs and politics. Furthermore, because of my age (22 at the time), the peer group I became a part of also had an important impact on the perspective garnered. All three factors may affect my resulting conclusions although a wide range of both age, occupation, and opinion is covered by the people with whom I spoke. After citing people in this thesis, I follow with both a name and age range to give the reader a general idea of the sources of the different opinions expressed, but for reasons of confidentiality, all names have been changed to pseudonyms, the ages are not specific, and I have not indicated the person's occupation.

The first three weeks I was in Sheshatshit, many families were still out in country (almost half the community went to hunting camps this spring) and I took the time to get situated and familiar with my surroundings, and started compiling a list of people I wanted to contact. I wanted to interview a range of people in order to reflect a variety of perspectives on community healing and I prioritized people who could be thought to have a special interest in the topic. This included both young and middle aged individuals that had recently returned from treatment programmes and training programmes,

community members working as counsellors in the intervention programmes, older people who would remember quite well when treatment programmes did not exist and would have a perspective different from younger people on both the past and present social problems than younger people; and people involved in policy planning for intervention programmes. That is to say, operating from the premise that it is impossible to seize upon an intangible social phenomenon such as "community healing", one can instead approach an understanding of it by attempting to discover how it crystallizes for particular groups of people in a particular moment of time. As I kept learning more about the community and kept talking informally to people I had met, the list grew. Some people were quite easy to reach and speak with; others were more difficult to get a hold of as summer is travel time for many. Once I had contacted and spoken with people working in office positions (such as Healing Services workers, Social Services workers, and Innu Nation Staff) who were easier to reach, I found that I was having difficulty locating and talking to people I wanted to meet but did not know. After some thought and discussion with my host family, I asked a good woman friend to walk with me around the community to help me track down the people on my list and introduce me to them, a few at a time. This was quite effective and her help made an enormous difference in enriching my research as I was now able to reach whole other circles of community residents.

All but two people I was able to approach were willing to meet and talk with me. The two women who were not interested were not hostile, but after trying to set up interviews unsuccessfully with them at different times, it became clear that they did not want to meet with me, and consequently I left them alone.

Although the sample size is small, I feel that the very nature of my research dictated it. I was talking to people about *community* healing and what that means to them, but the healing process for this community has come about in response to *personal* tragedies of immense proportion. The stories many people shared with me about their

lives and the pain of abuse and neglect and alcoholism in them are intimate and difficult ones. Tears were shed in more than one interview as the stories unfolded and old memories brought back. For this reason also I relied on note taking rather than tape-recording during the interviews as it was less invasive and less threatening to people that were already sharing intimate elements of themselves.

While getting my bearings and settling in and beginning actually to talk to people, I was also becoming more and more submerged into the daily rhythm of Sheshatshit and internalizing the energy of this new place. As different episodes I recount in the body of this thesis will show, this was often an abrupt process, as the pain and violence of the community and of its history disturbed and shook me. Understandably then, my comprehension of healing is filtered by this atmosphere and has influenced the way I think and write about community healing. In particular, it strengthens my preliminary impression that contemporary research needs to focus more on positive initiatives arising from within Native communities (such as the community healing movement) to address sometimes overwhelming social conditions.

My initial research objectives were to look at the concept of community healing as it is situated within a larger socio-political context and investigate how Innu in Sheshatshit are using the discourse of healing to address pressing issues of social disintegration in a way that is meaningful and useful to them. Thus I was interested in contacting and learning from people who had been to treatment programmes; community members who have trained as addiction counsellors; people involved in the Nechi Treatment programme; Innu who have served on local health boards in the community and other people not active in this arena as an important contrast to those who are. As I began to live in Sheshatshit and began to talk to people about what community healing "is", it became clearer that people were talking about healing in distinct ways: "healing" as an individual pursuit but with dramatic implications for the community as a whole; healing through intervention programmes such as those offered in the community or in

external treatment centres to address abuse and to offer support to recovering people; and "being in country" as a place of healing in contrast with the community that was more a place of addiction and trouble.

The people I spoke with are all individuals with an opinion on the topic of community healing (often a strong one), on what healing "is" and what its role should be in the community. This is not to say that the community speaks in one voice; indeed, I have already tried to show how it does not. However, there is a strong sense within Sheshatshit that these are pressing social problems and that something must change. Community healing is one entry into this process, and one that many people had something to say about.

CHAPTER TWO

Sheshatshit

The project and its setting

Sheshatshit is one of two Innu communities in Labrador¹⁶. The provincial southern border of Quebec-Labrador now bisects the traditional homeland of the Innu, known in *Innu-aimun* as *Nitassinan*, and approximately 10,000 Innu live today in 13 communities spread up the north shore of the St. Lawrence and into Labrador; Sheshatshit is home for about 950 Innu. Sheshatshit is located at the union of Grand Lake and Lake Melville (see map, page v), which eventually leads through a series of bays to the Atlantic Ocean. Due to this geographical feature, Lake Melville experiences tides and in places is briny (Northwest Point), but in other areas, potable (Kanimesh). The two lakes come together at a narrow span of water that is today joined by a bridge. Sheshatshit is actually on the southern bank of land and the Settler¹⁷ community of North West River is located on the northern side, with a population of about 600; the other nearest town, Happy Valley-Goose Bay¹⁸, is 40km around the south-western side of Lake Melville with a population of 8,610¹⁹. Sheshatshit was for many years considered a part of North West River, but in 1979 it separated and became its own distinct municipality. Although the two communities exist side by side and are both small, there is not a lot of fraternising between the two populations -- however, since the Northern Store (formally the Hudson's Bay Company), the Post Office, a nurse's clinic, the video rental shop, and the gas station are all located "cross the river", there is a certain amount

¹⁶The other is Utshimassit (Davis Inlet), 500 miles to the north-east.

¹⁷Settlers are people of English, Scottish, and Inuit descent. Their European ancestors were involved in trading or trapping activities of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Northwest Company in central and coastal Labrador, dating back to the late 1700's and 1800's, and intermarried with Inuit.

¹⁸Happy Valley and Goose Bay are contiguous municipalities and population centres that are not readily differentiated; local people often refer to "the Valley" or to "Goose Bay" indiscriminately.

¹⁹Statistics Canada (1992) 1991 Census, Cat.No. 95-301, Ottawa: Minister of Industry, Science, and Technology.

of contact between the two groups as Sheshatshit community members are obliged to cross over in order to take advantage of these services. For the most part however, each community keeps to itself. Some authors have referred to Sheshatshit and North West River as "two solitudes" and describe tense relations between the two communities (Wadden 59:1991; Plaice 1990), but I did not witness or experience the animosity to which they allude. I discuss the history and relevance of the interactions of these two communities further on in this chapter as it is important to local identity construction, but first, I shall describe the area more thoroughly.

Labrador may be remote, but it is also an exquisitely beautiful place as I experienced it from spring through early fall. The landscape is characterised by tall, dark emerald, scruffy pine trees; huge expanses of blue sky and streaking high, thin clouds until the summer rains came raging through; and jutting hills that crowd the sides of rivers. The Mealy Mountains are visible on the far side of Lake Melville, with their snow capped tops long into the month of June, disappearing in July, only to return again by the beginning of September. The lake's water was cold to my southerner's mind still recovering from the shock that it was 27 degrees in Montreal at the airport in late May, and 10 degrees that very same day in Goose Bay, but the children in the community spend as much time as possible playing in the lake's welcoming embrace during the spring and summer. Spring comes late to Labrador, with the trees and shrubs beginning to bud in mid-June; summer is a quick succession of black-flies in July, a vigorous burst of brilliant greenery in bushes and trees and the magenta flashes of tall, spiky wildflowers, a couple weeks above 30 degrees, and then a dramatic cooling by mid-August. By late September, the birch trees start to turn a splendid golden shade against the dark green of the pines, and snow showers are not uncommon by October. Daylight lasts late into the evening around the summer solstice - it would just finally be dark around 10:30 or 11:00 at night, and the horizon would start to lighten again around 3 am, with the sun up by 4:30 am.

Sheshatshit in time and space²⁰

Before becoming a permanent settlement in the early 1960's, the area surrounding Sheshatshit was for many generations a place where Innu families rejoined each other for a few months in the summer to visit and fish²¹. As the season wore on, smaller family groupings would leave and return to their hunting camps in *nutshimit*, or "in country". This cyclical pattern of nomadic caribou hunting during the majority of the year with summer visits to Sheshatshit²² has only recently come to a halt²³ within the past thirty-five years, but hunting and fishing remain extremely important to many families in Sheshatshit. Almost half the community enjoys seasonal trips out in country in both the fall and spring for two to three months at a time²⁴ to harvest migrating caribou herds, but virtually no one lives entirely off the land any more, and every family has well-established homes in the community. A multitude of social and political factors converged over the past forty years in Sheshatshit and Labrador to precipitate these changes, and I will explore the development of some of these factors here as they are central to situating both present day Sheshatshit and community healing within their proper context.

Before delving directly into these issues, there are three general points arising from the academic literature concerning Innu history that bear preliminary discussion. Firstly, a survey of these writings produces a number of pieces that are highly descriptive

²⁰I chose this title and realized later that Mailhot (1993) uses the same title in French for a section of her book.

²¹And in more recent times, also to stock up on supplies from the Hudson's Bay Company store in North West River.

²²This Innu word translates into English as "large mouth of the river", or more elegantly into French as "la Grande Embouchure" (Mailhot 1993:19).

²³See Henriksen (1973) for a similar account concerning Innu in Utshimassit.

²⁴Two years ago the Catholic school board commenced a policy recognizing absences from school during these periods as cultural or traditional leave for children and they will no longer penalize or keep a child back for a school year if the family goes in Country. Indeed, when I visited the school in Sheshatshit in early June, some of the teachers remarked that there were not many students in school at that time because so many had gone in Country. For instance, the kindergarten class had 18 children on the class list, but only 6 were still attending class. The others were with their families in hunting camps.

and ethnographic in detail but lacking in socio-cultural analysis²⁵. José Mailhot (1993) and Georg Henriksen (1973; 1993) are two notable exceptions to this pattern, and I rely heavily on their works on Sheshatshit and Utshimassit respectively in portraying the historical context of Sheshatshit. Secondly, "The Innu" are often referred to in the literature as if they are one large homogenous group. However, there are distinct and important regional differences among the various groups. For example, cultural differences exist between Mushuau Innu of Utshimassit²⁶ who hunt caribou on the open tundra and other Innu groups in Quebec that relied on a boreal environment for their subsistence; Leacock (1955) indicates differences in land tenure practices in western and eastern Innu groups; Tanner points out distinctions between Innu groups in Labrador and in Quebec that arose due to varying experiences of the different regional groups with external factors such as the fur trade and missionaries: "those on the St. Lawrence were different from the Atlantic coast of Labrador, and different again from those who arrived via Ungava Bay. There were also differences between Quebec and Labrador Innu in the influence of neighbouring non-Innu" (1995:7). Examples he offers are the different second languages learned by Innu in Labrador (English) and in Quebec (French) and the different denominations of christianity introduced locally by missionaries. Conversely, even given these unique aspects, there was historically and is still today a large amount of travel between Atlantic, St. Lawrence, and Ungava groups²⁷. Indeed, the geographical configuration of the Quebec-Labrador peninsula with its many lakes and connecting rivers precipitated a great deal of travel, visiting, and seasonal gatherings (Mailhot 1993; Tanner 1995:8) that maintained contact between the regional groups.

²⁵ Although a large amount of detailed ethnolinguistic work has been done (see for example: Clarke 1972; Clarke and MacKenzie 1984; Drapeau 1984; MacKenzie 1980; MacKenzie and Clarke 1981; Vincent 1978; 1992).

²⁶ Henriksen (1973; 1993) refers to these people as the "people of the barrens". "The Barrens" is the name for the area above the tree-line that neighbours Utshimassit, devoid of spruce and birch trees that are found further south in the boreal forests of Labrador and Quebec.

²⁷ Tanner's divisional terms (1995).

Thirdly, there exists a regrettable image created by early ethnographers of Labrador Innu as culturally 'pristine' and as one of the last aboriginal groups in North America to remain 'untouched' by contact with outsiders (see for example: Leacock 1955; Speck 1935). This might have enhanced Innu status as Other and as "savage hunters", subsequently furthering the researchers' credibility as 'real' anthropologists, but it is a misleading and imposed myth. Clearly, Innu have never been a static, self-contained unit but instead have for thousands of years interacted with neighbouring groups of Inuit to the north, and other indigenous groups to the south. For example, as Mailhot (1993) documents, archaeologists hypothesize that extensive trading networks spanned Labrador and Quebec, stretching as far south as the north-eastern United States and as far west as James Bay. Researchers posit these networks due to the preponderance of Ramah chert found in ancient dwelling sites across these areas. The chert, a kind of quartz, was used to make tools during a period of time almost 1800 years ago. The stone is found only in north-eastern Labrador, but the implements are widespread and appear in areas far distant from where the stone originates. Apparently Inuit (Dorset) traded chert with Innu for other objects, and then in turn, Innu would trade with groups further south and east long before Europeans arrived in the area (Mailhot 1993:22; Wadden 1991:24).

Even aside from this archaeological evidence of trade, Innu must inevitably have interacted with other indigenous groups during their extensive travels across the Quebec-Labrador peninsula. Innu were historically (and still are) well acquainted with enormous expanses of this territory; individuals would cover vast distances during the course of a lifetime, from as far north as Fort Chimo to the more centrally located Lake Melville area, to more southern areas like Sept-Iles in Quebec. As mobile hunters, Innu group composition was highly fluid, fluctuating in size according to both the availability of resources and the season, with seasonal migrations to coastal areas in the summer for fishing and to the interior in fall and winter for caribou hunting and in later years, for trapping (Fitzhugh 1972; Henriksen 1973). Both of these factors would only intensify

the amount of travel and subsequent interaction with neighbouring groups. Furthermore, as alluded to above, Mailhot (1993) describes the vast Innu family networks ("réseau de parenté") created by marriage and descent that facilitated this extensive travelling and access to neighbouring territories and hunting areas (ibid:135-9). The networks were integral to Innu social structure and remain important still today:

À l'époque où ils étaient des chasseurs nomades, les Innus circulaient à l'aise dans toute la moitié orientale de la péninsule du Québec-Labrador; chaque groupe entretenait des relations étroites avec ses voisins, on s'intermariait, et les individus changeaient volontiers de groupe et de territoire. C'est ainsi que fut mis en place l'immense et complexe réseau de parenté qui caractérise encore aujourd'hui les Gens de Sheshatshit (ibid:43)

As such, although the territory might have appeared prohibitively isolated to early ethnographers, there appears to have been (and is still today) what Mailhot terms "[un] va-et-vient constant" (ibid:48) among the different Innu populations. One could then expect that a great deal of knowledge-sharing and communication occurred between groups in spite of the distances separating them and their relatively sparse populations. Furthermore, it seems perfectly plausible that such a large amount of travel would bring Innu into contact with other Aboriginal groups, such as the Micmacs and Beothuks.

Although it is difficult to document the nature of such interactions, Mailhot recounts that evidence exists in Innu oral tradition suggesting historical tensions in Innu-Inuit relations. Circa 1600 AD, the predecessors of Inuit (Thules) began expanding southward and occupying central coastal Labrador, creating conflict with local Innu groups as both were competing for the same marine resources. These pressures eventually forced Innu to modify their subsistence patterns and move to locations in the interior (ibid:1993:22). Clearly, dynamics and tensions in Innu interactions with non-Innu did not begin with their first sighting of Europeans, but instead have been a continuous process.

Newcomers/outsideers

As Innu interactions with other Aboriginal groups varied greatly over time and space, so did Innu contact with Europeans. Although difficult to document, Innu groups probably encountered exploring Vikings as early as 1000 AD; a series of other European groups followed sporadically after that, such as Dutch whalers in the 16th century, and Breton, Basque, and Normand walrus hunters soon after (Mailhot 1993:25-6). As European interest in the 'New World' and the fur trade grew, so did the numbers of white trappers, traders, whalers, and missionaries in Labrador and Quebec. The first trading post in the Lake Melville area was established in 1743 by Louis Fornel at North West River. As Plaiice notes, "the establishment of Fornel's post initiated a trend in which sojourning traders and pioneers -- Frenchmen from Quebec and British seamen -- began appearing in the Inlet" (1992:1) on a more regular basis. Indeed, French activity from Quebec and into Labrador was quite extensive, and "by the end of the 17th century the French had over a dozen settlements, missions, fishing stations, and trading posts along the southern periphery of the Labrador peninsula and were in the Lake Melville area" (McGee 1961:127 fn). The Hudson's Bay Company followed Fornel's initiative and established a trading post in 1836 at North West River, followed sixty five years later in 1901 by Revillon Freres. As trade grew, "North West River became the regional fur trade centre by the turn of the (20th) century" (Plaiice 1990:1) and this level of activity no doubt affected local Innu, but their involvement in the fur trade was not consistent. Trapping was not easily compatible with a subsistence hunting lifestyle, and Innu did not depend on trade for food when caribou were plentiful. Some Innu did use fur trapping as an income supplement, and at times some Innu turned to the posts for assistance when a lack of game threatened starvation²⁸, but Innu in Labrador were notoriously resistant to

²⁸But not in every instance. Wadden relates how traders were eager to create Innu dependence on their trade goods so that they would have a steady source of furs: one HBC post manager in 1846 named Donald Henderson "refused ammunition to Innu families at his post...hoping that they would learn a lesson and return the following fall with furs to exchange for gunpowder. Instead, thirty-six people

pressures from trading posts to engage in full-time trapping (Henriksen 1973:10-12; Harper 1964:32). Eventually, it was the Settlers with their extensive traplines who became the major fur suppliers for the area (Tanner 1993:92).

Although the fur trade had attracted a fair number of whites to the area as early as the 1830's, this population appears to have integrated fairly peaceably with the local Inuit groups, many intermarrying and pursuing the lifestyle of trappers/subsistence level hunters²⁹; conversely, very few Innu and whites seem to have established families together, each group keeping more or less to itself. Tanner describes how

in contrast to the pattern of relations which developed between Europeans and the Inuit, no intermarriages between Innu and Settlers occurred. The uncompromising Innu values and often sharp-edged Innu personality were found by Europeans to be in marked contrast to those of the more pliant and accommodating Inuit, to whom they had first become adapted (ibid:92)

It is, at best, difficult to guess at historical motivations and hypothesize emotions, but it is true by most accounts that although many Inuit and Europeans in the area had families together, few if any Innu entered into the same sort of arrangement. I would not rely on group personality traits as the explanation for this phenomenon, but wonder if differences in lifestyle, infrequent contact, and Innu attitudes towards whites were not more important as determining factors.

"Cross the river"

Even if intermarriages did not occur, some Innu and Settlers did develop close friendships. Evelyn Plaice conducted research in North West River on ethnicity and contemporary settler perceptions of Innu/Settler relations. She spoke with many "old timers" in North West River who trapped when young and reminisced with her about

starved. Henderson repeated his murderous policy the following year, and there was more starvation" (Wadden 1991:31).

²⁹See Plaice (1992) for a more in-depth discussion of the history and origins of Settlers in Labrador, especially in North West River.

their Innu "buddies" from long ago, relationships that life in the bush fostered between Innu and Settlers. As Plaice points out, this was a

relationship of interdependence between Settlers and Indians while both groups subsisted in the country, and it was symbolized by commensuality and hospitality. Settlers relied on Indians to provide tools, such as snowshoes, toboggans and crooked knives, and to prepare caribou hide for leggings, boots and mitts, all of which were essential for trapping. Indians increasingly relied on goods traded from Settlers in the country or from the posts. Supplies were limited by the fact that the journey into the country was made by canoe and foot, and it was often necessary to share these meagre supplies with others who had run short or lost their supplies through misadventure. Indians frequently traded hides and skins for food when they met trappers in the bush, and they sometimes used the Settlers they met regularly as middlemen traders, thus averting the need to travel out to a trading post. (1990:71-2)

Subsequently, friendships developed between Innu and Settlers out of commensurate needs and overlapping lifestyles. This was perhaps even more significant as visiting and a welcoming reception were important for these relatively solitary trappers and hunters out in the bush:

neighbouring Indians and Settlers provided necessary support in difficult times for otherwise isolated individuals. Hospitality was important in a sparsely inhabited country, and the visits of people trapping and hunting in the vicinity were welcome highlights in an otherwise lonely existence for the trappers. The visits of 'buddies' who were on their way between the post and their camps often meant an exchange of news and goods. Friendships often formed between Settlers and Indians who frequented the same districts in the country, and a pattern of visiting was a less important criterion for visiting than was the proximity of a tilt³⁰ or camp to a route being taken by journeying trappers and Indians. (ibid: 72)

Plaice's research shows convincingly that, at least from the older Settlers' perspectives, relations between themselves and local Innu were quite amicable. Although I did not specifically interview elder Innu on how they remembered the same interactions, my

³⁰Tilts are temporary shelters constructed between two closely standing trees. Two tree trunks are used as braces for a downward slanting roof made of thick branches and covered with pine boughs to keep out the elements. A hearth is often built directly in front of the tilt to provide heat and for cooking.

perception of these interactions coincides with what Plaice found. The older members of the family I stayed with made occasional comments about old friends and acquaintances "cross the river", and would at times do a little visiting with these people when in North West River on an errand, such as checking for mail at the post office. By contrast, none of my Innu peers had Settler acquaintances that they would drop in on while running similar errands. Plaice's research on inter-generational differences in Settler attitudes towards neighbouring Innu mirrors this observation. As we saw above, she posits that the "oldtimers" have good memories of their Innu "buddies". She also found that the oldtimers' offspring, now aged 45 to 50, share these positive memories of their parents' adult Innu friends and remember interacting with them as children, but do not have Innu friends of their own. Subsequently, this generation's children, the oldtimer's grandchildren (currently in the age bracket of 20 and under), never had the benefit of social contact with Innu through their parents, unlike the generation before them (ibid:77-83). As a result, Plaice typifies this youngest generation's attitude towards their Innu peers as hostile, whereas just fifty years ago, it was quite the opposite. Plaice attributes this shift in relations to the sedentarization experienced by both groups: "both groups are in year-long social contact which is no longer based solely upon the shared pursuit of economic activities and the concomitant skills, which was the case in the country. In fact, the physical proximity of the two groups has, paradoxically, resulted in an increased sense of separation between Indians and Settlers" (ibid:74-5), especially in the youngest generation that does not share memories of life in the bush. Both sedentarization and its resulting impact on Innu-Settler relations are just two of many significant changes in Innu life as we shall see in the next section .

Rapid changes

Initially, the gradual encroachment of trading posts and missionaries in Quebec and Labrador did not dramatically change Innu life. Innu in Labrador continued their

seasonal movement patterns relatively undisturbed by the Settlers, maintaining generally amicable relations; furthermore, unlike the rest of Canada, Newfoundland did not have an "administrative infrastructure specifically devoted to [Innu or Aboriginal affairs]...leaving such matters largely in the hands of missionaries and a police force, the Rangers" (Tanner 1993:90), neither of which played a large role in daily Innu life. Innu living in the interior of Labrador would spend only a few short periods on the coast in the summers to trade and visit with one another, only to "disappear" again into the interior to live and hunt where few if any whites ventured. Some Innu living in Labrador did become "christianized" through interaction with Jesuits and Oblates from Quebec, but contact with these missionaries was limited to journeys into Quebec or to summertime visits of the priest to Sheshatshit. Oblate missionaries from Quebec made annual visits to Sheshatshit from 1866 to 1896 for a few weeks in the summer to perform marriages and baptisms, and then Catholic missionaries from Newfoundland recommenced the annual visits in 1921 (Ryan 1988:4). There was no resident priest in Sheshatshit until 1952 (Mailhot 1993:37)³¹. Thus, although Innu experienced a fair amount of contact with outsiders such as traders and missionaries, they maintained a high degree of autonomy for many centuries unlike many other indigenous groups in Canada. This was due partly to their movement patterns far into the Labrador interior where they lived as subsistence hunters, but also to a distinct lack of governmental involvement in their affairs until the middle of the 20th century. It was then that a number of factors converged that dramatically affected Innu lives.

Although relations were generally good between Settlers and Innu, by the 1920's and 1930's the expanding traplines of the Settlers had become a heavy ecological burden³² on Innu lands and tensions between the two groups flared up in several vitriolic

³¹For a more detailed history of missionary activity among Innu in Quebec and Labrador, see Mailhot's (1993:29-37) excellent and comprehensive account.

³² This situation occurred earlier in Quebec: "between 1845 and 1850 petitions were sent to both the Governor of Quebec [sic] and the Governor of Canada from the Innu of Quebec complaining of hunting

incidents (Tanner 1993:92). Innu experienced game shortages due in part to the ever increasing numbers of Settler traplines, and starvation became even more of a threat. This in turn led to a growing reliance on government relief for the Innu during the period (Plaice 1990:2, attributed to Cooke [1979] and Zimmerly [1975]), and the missionaries and trading post managers responsible for the distribution of relief goods were able to intervene more forcefully in Innu affairs.

Then, in 1941, the number of non-Native people in the area began to increase again, due to the establishment of an airbase in Goose Bay. The base began "as a defensive measure in connection with World War II, and as a staging depot or stopover point for fighters and bombers flying to Europe via Greenland, Iceland, and Scotland in the late 1940's" (McGee 1961:17). The influx of newcomers only added to the decline in local wildlife resources and subsequently increased the reliance of some Innu on government relief to supplement their hunting. Then, a strict provincial policy of wildlife regulations subjected Innu to the same hunting restrictions as all non-Natives, further increasing Innu dependence on both church and state sources of economic assistance. In addition, these new game laws included caribou, an animal of central cultural importance to Innu who were now subject to persecution if caught caribou hunting (Tanner 1993; see also Mailhot and Michaud 1965).

Ryan's (1988) work on the economic development of Newfoundland and its connection to Innu settlement helps further to illuminate issues surrounding this time period. As he explains, Newfoundland and Labrador at the time of Confederation with

failures, starvation and their need for their own land, due to the influx of settlers. As a result, three reserves were eventually established at Lac St.Jean, Les Escoumins, and Betsiamites, and the first emergency food rations were supplied to starving Innu" (Tanner 1995:11); Wadden (1991:32) also recounts how "in 1848 Innu from the Upper Saguenay area presented a petition to the governor-general of Lower Canada stating that they were no longer able to supply their own food and clothing because they had lost so much land to settlers and they requested that a large parcel of land be protected for Innu use along the Peribonca River and near Lac St.Jean. The Innu also asked to be paid royalties collected from traders and logging operations and from the sale of Innu land, which went to the government. The only response to the petition was the establishment of the small reserve of Pointe-Bleue ten years later".

Canada in 1949 were unindustrialized, underdeveloped and suffering economically, depending solely on their fisheries. As such, the newly formed provincial government developed an intense development programme to create and sustain a new economy based primarily on the exploitation of natural resources. Aboriginal affairs in this atmosphere of development and modernization were placed under the control of the Department of Welfare's Division of Labrador Affairs that followed a policy of assimilation and integration in order to prepare Innu and Inuit for 'their role' in economic development: "by virtue of an ability to provide essential services to a people whose life-sustaining resources were rapidly dwindling, these agencies were able to dictate the terms upon which the Innut [sic] were to live" (Ryan 1988: 6-11). A policy of assimilation by state and church officials both to discourage trips in country and to "encourage" (coerce) Innu children to attend the white school by threatening to cut off family allowances if families took their children out of school to go in country took place (ibid: 2-6; see also Wadden 1991:65). Within the short span of twenty years or less, Innu autonomy declined dramatically due to these combined forces (see also Tanner 1993).

One of the new province's development projects was the damming of the Churchill River in 1974 for electricity, creating the immense Smallwood Reservoir of 6,700 km². The consequent flooding also destroyed numerous Innu hunting camps where people had left tools and traps stored for the next season's use, desecrated burial sites, and wastefully drowned many of the same animals that Innu were forbidden to hunt (Innu Nation Homepage 1996). Innu soon found themselves to be strangers in their own land, surrounded by a hegemonic culture that ridiculed Innu ways and devalued Innu knowledge. Innu became largely forced into living conditions and patterns wholly foreign to them; their children were expected to attend a school that had no Innu cultural significance, and all things possible were done to ensure that they became incorporated into the new industrialized vision Newfoundland had set for itself. Assimilation and cultural oppression are destructive forces no matter what guise they assume, and the

intense cultural changes over such a short period of time are at the root of many of the social problems experienced in Sheshatshit today. One man I spoke with encapsulated this experience when he said: "the children of today [in Sheshatshit] are lost in the whites' culture that seems to promise them everything but that will never accept them as equals...". It is this loss of dignity as a people due to a dramatic decrease in local self-determination resulting in a loss of cultural pride and confidence that has helped bring about the social crisis that people in Sheshatshit are facing today, and it is within this context that community healing takes on such immense importance.

Sheshatshit today

Sheshatshit has grown to over 100 houses, and 8 new ones are currently under construction. Most of the houses are identical in design to their neighbors, a point of annoyance to some people in the community because of the monotony. The houses are small but cozy and welcoming, most in a one story ranch style with a kitchen/living room area, bathroom, and generally three bedrooms. I was placed with a family that at the time had a spare bedroom, but most houses are quite full with large extended families (grandparents, parents, children, grandchildren, cousins, aunts, and uncles) living together; unlike Utshimassit, houses in Sheshatshit are fully equipped with both electricity and running water.

The community is a closely knit web of relations: cousins, intermarriages and distant relatives. Everyone seems to be related in some way to everyone else, although some ties are much stronger than others and families in the community are distinctly marked by association and dis-association. There are a dozen or so marriages and partnerships of Innu men or women with non-Innu, but generally partners are found from within the community, in Utshimassit, or from one of the Innu communities in Quebec. Most people have relatives throughout all of these places, and much visiting back and forth takes place, especially in the summer. Children in the community have a great deal

of freedom and license to play and amuse themselves outside, and it is not unusual to see groups of kids out in the very early morning during the summer, out looking for things to do by 4 or 5 a.m.

Sheshatshit is built on the south bank of the river, a sloping and at times steep incline. The roads are not paved, are quite bumpy, and can become rather dusty when dry. However, the connecting road to Happy Valley-Goose Bay is paved and gets a lot of use as residents from both Sheshatshit and North West River travel back and forth regularly for groceries, to go to the bank, to bingo games, to go to work in Goose Bay, to go to the hospital, and for amusement.

Sheshatshit also has two convenience stores (both family run)³³, the Peenamin McKenzie School (grades K-12), the Innu Nation office, the Band Council Office, *Innu Tipatshimun Mashineikantshiuap* (the Innu Nation Resource Centre), the Mani Ashini Health Clinic (sponsored by the Innu Nation), *Innu Atautshuap* (the Innu cultural store and cultural skills school), the Group Home for young offenders, the Alcohol and Drug Treatment Centre (that also houses Healing Services), and the Social Services building.

Hunting and fishing are still important to people in the community, and the household I lived with supplemented their diet of such store bought foods as hamburger, chicken, potatoes, and canned vegetables with fresh salmon, caribou, rabbit, partridge, beaver, and porcupine. These tend to be netted, hunted, or snared by older men (grandfathers in the case of my host family), but the younger generations that have had experience in country also know how to catch and prepare the same foods. White bread from the store is also supplemented with *innu pakueshikan*, a bread made with flour, baking powder and water and baked on the stove top³⁴; some women still make a jam called *minapui* from a red berry gathered in September, and the *mokoshan* feast described by other ethnographers (see Speck 1935; Leacock and Rothschild 1994;

³³Since writing this, I have learned that one of the convenience stores has now closed.

³⁴Known in English as "bannock".

Harper 1964; Henriksen 1973) centring on the consumption of caribou marrow is still practiced, although seemingly with less religious reverence than in earlier days. It is however but still an important social gathering and greatly relished.

Innu-aimun is the community's first language, although the majority of people are also bilingual in English due to the influence of school and television. However, *Innu-aimun* is the language of choice and people speak it with each other and their children, and most children speak only *Innu-aimun* until they begin attending school.

CHAPTER THREE

Community and country: the fabric of social life

Although Sheshatshit is today a permanent community, most people's living space is not limited to it alone. Instead, this living space extends beyond Sheshatshit itself to also encompass life in country. More than half of the families living in Sheshatshit were gone when I first arrived in the spring of 1995 -- they were out in country, in their respective hunting camps. Both the atmosphere and lifestyle in these two settings of community and country are markedly different, and people I spoke with were quite explicit about distinguishing between the two. The community discourse concerning these two settings helps to illuminate how community members conceptualize and experience the two spaces as well as how the discourse about the uniqueness of the country setting is being mobilized by community members in their attempts to make sense of their lives and of the issues facing the community. As such, an examination of this discourse and of the two settings is of central importance in order to properly contextualize community healing. In this chapter, I examine this discourse about the two spaces in conjunction with my own observations in order to facilitate a discussion of what healing "is" in the next chapter.

The community: some initial impressions

We had all just climbed out of the pick-up truck and begun walking up the plank stairs to the front porch of the house. Isabelle was ahead of me, Michel's keys in her hand, getting ready to open the door for the rest of us weary from a long but fun Friday night out in The Valley. Suddenly, I became aware of the friends behind me who had been closer to the street quickly pressing in towards the porch, and an urgency passed among us as we heard approaching noises in the dark. I felt the fear in her fumbling and fussing with the unfamiliar key-ring, trying to open the door and to get inside the sanctity

of the house as quickly as possible; the whispers passing among us of someone is coming, and they are drunk. Finally, the key entered and turned, the door relented and we flooded inside, locking the door behind us, shutting out the blackness of the night. We were through the doorway and safely inside, but unable to shake the nervousness about that unknown person still somewhere outside, moving drunkenly in the dark, wondering who it was, what might happen, and thankful that, at least this time, we had evaded drunken jibberish and unending demands for cigarettes or use of the telephone.

One night several weeks later, I went to bed around midnight after having shared a relaxing evening with Carol and Michel at the kitchen table, drinking tea and talking. I quickly fell asleep, pleased with a day well-spent and wondering what the next one would bring. The next thing I was conscious of was the early summer sunlight streaming into my bedroom. I glanced at the alarm clock, sleepily wondering why I was awake at 5:30 am when I heard the noise that had startled me out of sleep: someone was outside, hitting the exterior walls of the house. The person continued rapping on the walls, shouting some things in Innu-aimun that I could not understand, while she or he moved around the perimeter of the house, lingering under open windows, and generally terrifying me. I was afraid to look out the window because I did not want the person to know that I was there; I was afraid to move because any noise I made would be detected; I felt alone and certain that I was the only person awake in the house -- all I wanted to do was hide myself deeper in the blankets and hope that whoever it was would soon go away. Then I heard Carol stirring, get up out of bed, and move silently into the kitchen. She took stock of the situation, verified that the front door was indeed locked, and then returned to her room, ignoring the person outside. Eventually the person left; my heartbeat returned to normal, and I fell asleep. Carol and I talked only briefly about the incident the next day: she had not looked out the window either, and assumed as I had that whoever was responsible had been drunk. We did not discuss the matter again.

Matinen is in her early sixties now – she and her husband were both born in country and are very knowledgeable and experienced in country ways. They spend as much time at their campsite as possible, but pass the winters in Sheshatshit in the house with their grown children. Matinen is highly skilled with her hands and likes to sew. One morning, one of her sisters came over to the house with a bundle of tent canvas and the two sat down to cut the pieces for a new tent. Helping each other, they manoeuvred the awkward and heavy bolt of canvas, passing the cutting shears back and forth, chatting, laughing, keeping the toddlers out of harm's way and off their working surface, confidently measuring only by eye. It was a fun and peaceful morning, and everyone enjoyed the change in routine as well as the chance to visit.

"Ripples in a pond"

Sheshatshit is home to almost one thousand people. Families live there; kids play there; people have fun there; people laugh, cry, grow and love in Sheshatshit like anywhere else. However, Sheshatshit is also a place experiencing great turmoil on both community and individual levels, as people expressed quite clearly to me:

There is not one family here that has not been touched by abuse, violence, fear... (Caroline, late forties)

The community has evil in it...drugs, alcohol, and something is wrong here. (Agnes, late thirties)

There *is* no community here...there are no shared goals, no shared worths, no common values. This is not a community...its a village. (Rita, late thirties)

This community is like a casket. A casket that was buried and is now rising up again as people go through the healing process and all sorts of stuff starts coming out. (Alex, late twenties)

These tensions are further exacerbated by the size and composition of Sheshatshit, a small and intricately connected living space. Family networks are extensive and blood, marriage, or adoption connects each individual person to a large number of relatives in the

community³⁵. Given the small size and relative isolation of the community, even people not directly related to one another are familiar with each other as they have spent their entire lives together in the same community. Consequently, as several people pointed out to me, the events, both positive and negative, experienced by one person or family are not limited to the individuals directly involved:

Violence affects the community as a whole; people used to think that family violence, [and] abuse was an individual problem, but then we started realizing that Innu in the past have tried to deal with problems as a collective and that family violence is not isolated to two individuals...it's a community, not individual, problem. (William, late thirties)

Whatever happens here affects me personally; everyone knows everyone here; it's like one big family. (Joe, mid-thirties)

"Everyone knows everyone" and generally this means that everyone also knows what everyone else is doing. There is no anonymity in Sheshatshit. Although this might at first seem to be a positive attribute of living in a small community (as it could offer unity and support in trying times), I began to sense something different once I had lived through enough experiences like the first two I describe at the beginning of this chapter. Many people in Sheshatshit do *not* drink alcohol and a significant percentage of the community has 'gone dry' during the past ten years. Nonetheless, the drinking that does occur (and the actions that stem from it) affects everyone by impacting the community atmosphere in very real ways.

In Sheshatshit, people are generally reserved with one another unless they are family members or close friends; confrontation is not the preferred tactic for conflict resolution. But when on a drinking binge, all sorts of underlying feelings and emotions that are normally hidden deep inside burst forth. As such, drinking becomes a highly charged event in Sheshatshit, especially as so much *is* going on underneath the surface

³⁵And as Mailhot (1993) documents (discussed in the previous chapter), to a large network of relatives throughout the other Innu communities in Quebec and Labrador.

that people are trying to deal with: family violence, abuse received as children, feeling powerless in the face of dramatic cultural change, high levels of unemployment. Furthermore, Sheshatshit is small; "everyone knows everyone". The person stumbling across the gravel in the dark as you are trying to get into the house and the person pacing outside around your home, rapping on the walls, is not 'just some weirdo' as it might be in a larger urban area. This person is someone you know, someone you might have grown up with, or lived next door to your entire life. Or, it might be a relative: your brother, your cousin, or your aunt.

In response, a certain numbness has evolved in the community to deal with the drinking. This was not discussed explicitly, but rather was something I observed around me and eventually realized I myself had learned to do (without being conscious of it) in the interest of self-preservation. People ignore rather than address drunken fights and loud knocks on the front door early in the morning; absolve drinkers of responsibility for what they say while intoxicated ("don't listen to what she's saying, she's drunk"; "don't take it seriously, he's drunk"); evade neighbors and family members who are intoxicated and humour them when they cannot be avoided. As I interpret it, these responses to the drinking parallel the removed, detached way people recounted stories about tragic accidents and deaths that I described earlier: just as the storyteller seemed distanced from the events in the past that she was describing, so too did people deal with drinkers in the present. In both instances, extremely disturbing incidents transpire, but with such regularity and frequency that the response becomes one of outward indifference.

Although the surface response may be one of banality, the cumulative effect of these experiences fosters a less than peaceful atmosphere in the community and touches it in profound ways. Currents of tension and anticipation flow through the community, due not only to the drinking, but also the resulting actions -- fights, violence, abuse, suicides, and suicide attempts. As William and Joe said, these are not individual problems, but ones that affect the entire community. As such, I sensed a certain amount of unease,

avoidance, and tension in the community -- people will pass each other on the road while on walks and ignore each other completely; will turn the lights off in the house at night and keep the curtains tightly closed to avoid unwanted attention from the street, peering from between the curtains to see who is outside at the door; spread the word via telephone if someone in the family is drunk so that if they come to the door, the house occupants are aware of his or her condition. These actions however were something left unsaid. People spoke in general terms about the community atmosphere -- Caroline, Agnes, Rita, and Alex's comments typify the sentiments of discomfort and unhealthiness some people express about life in the community. But the currents of tension and avoidance that I describe are elements that I sensed rather than were explicitly discussed in specific terms. For example, when that anonymous person was outside the house early in the morning, Carol, Michel and I did not go into any detail about who it might have been or how it felt to be torn from sleep, nor were any feelings of anger or annoyance expressed -- it was instead as if it had never happened, and no-one wanted to talk about it; it became a non-event. Regardless, these silences in the discourse are revealing, and that which is left unsaid is as pertinent as what is explicitly expressed; what is not heard is just as crucial as what is³⁶. The avoidance that I refer to above could certainly be understood in a variety of ways and different elements could be accented. Perhaps what I perceived as people ignoring acquaintances while walking down the street is instead a more innocuous phenomenon such as a cultural pattern of social interaction distinctive to Innu people that excludes casual greetings. Another possible interpretation of both this and the detachment with which people recount tragic stories could be a social valorization of composure and an abhorrence of loss of self control. However, given the larger context within which I situate this discussion, I interpret these silences to point to both the profoundness and the insidiousness of the painful atmosphere in the community. People

³⁶Lorraine (1995) arrived at similar conclusions during her fieldwork in the Amazon.

do not talk about it because they cannot -- to talk about it would be to acknowledge its existence, and to acknowledge its existence would be to face an enormous kaleidoscope of accumulated and widespread pain.

Community (?) life

One older woman I spoke with told me that she traces the beginning of community problems (specifically, alcohol abuse and family violence) to "when the government began to build houses in Sheshatshit and forced the Innu to settle" there. Her comments mirror a recurring theme of dissatisfaction among some residents with the way of life in the community itself. Fernande Lacasse elaborates on these sentiments based on her own experiences and those of the people in her natal community, Moisie, an Innu community 15km from Sept-Iles:

Selon les anciens chasseurs, la fin de la vie nomade est loin d'avoir amélioré la santé des Montagnais. Être collé à l'année dans une réserve signifie ne plus bouger, ne plus marcher, ne plus faire d'exercice de façon quotidienne, en un mot perdre l'endurance et la forme physique. Le fait de vivre du jour au lendemain tous tassés les uns sur les autres - alors qu'on avait l'habitude de vivre en petits groupes familiaux - doit certainement créer des tensions et une pression psychologique qui étaient inconnues auparavant. En plus, les vieux parlent souvent de l'ennui, de l'ennui qui est rattaché au fait de vivre toujours au même endroit et de ne plus voir constamment d'endroits nouveaux en parcourant le pays (1982:27)

A new way of living has brought new social situations and new psychological pressures, and the discourse in the community shows a great self-awareness of this. One obvious example is how people talked about life in the community and living in houses. As one woman told me, "houses isolate people" (Rita, late thirties), and another said that "people feel isolated, even in the community" (Caroline, late forties). This sense of isolation in the community may seem ironic given William and Joe's comments above about "everyone knowing everyone" in the community and my own about the lack of anonymity there, but I believe that it points again to the atmosphere of tension and unease in the community. Some

people I spoke with also indicated that this isolation and maintenance of social distance among certain individuals is in part a way to avoid people who have hurt them in the past, especially people who have abused them. As such, the isolation becomes a necessary defence in order to protect oneself from new injuries or from remembering old ones³⁷.

In addition, the physical composition of Sheshatshit seems to intensify this isolation. Most of the houses are built high up off the ground with a steep set of stairs leading to the front door which is not at ground level; the sloping hill Sheshatshit is built on increases this effect as the houses are set back from the road and rise above it due to the angle of the hill. Furthermore, the houses are generally spread out and not immediately neighbouring. The overall effect of this is that the houses are spread far across the length of the community so that it might be a twenty or thirty minute walk to a relative's home. A fair number of people own vehicles of some sort that minimize this problem, but many others do not have access to vehicles and are not always inclined to venture out for a walk and a visit. However, certain others are avid walkers and regular visitors regardless of these factors that impede some people's visiting. A few people expressed to me that telephones add to this isolation and the distance between houses because it has become easier to just make a call instead of going to visit. Whereas before telephone service people would see more of each other, now they are more likely to talk to each other on the phone instead of making the effort to see each other face to face.

As much as isolation is an issue in Sheshatshit, so too is boredom. The "ennui" that Lacasse refers to is omnipresent in Sheshatshit. This was both observable and something that people spoke to me about. While discussing what she felt to be the most pressing issues in the community, one woman said outright that "there is a tremendous degree of boredom in the community" (Caroline, late forties), and sometimes very little else to do but stay in the house, watch TV, play bingo, or babysit. Another person pointed out that

³⁷My thanks to Professor Ellen Corin for her discussions with me on this point.

there is no place in the community for children to meet and play: no recreational centre, no jungle gym equipment, no organized intramural activities. This holds true for adults as well: the isolation is mirrored by a marked lack of communal, shared space for activities or amusement in Sheshatshit. Bingo is one exception to this, and it is an extremely popular pursuit³⁸. There is a local bingo circuit whereby each night of the week a game is held in a different location, usually starting around 7 or 7:30 pm and lasting for a couple of hours. Significantly, all of these bingo games are held in facilities in Goose Bay-Happy Valley, and not in Sheshatshit itself³⁹. Around 6 or 6:30 pm every night, a steady stream of vehicles traverses the road connecting Sheshatshit with Goose-Bay, each full with eager "bingo maniacs" making the trip into the Valley, hoping for a lucky break and big winnings. Ironically, although the bingo games take place in large halls with a couple hundred people (both Innu and non-Natives) in attendance, there is minimal socializing among the various community members in attendance at the game. People come to the game with their lifts, sit with the people they came with, and leave with the same group with very little interaction with any of the other Sheshatshit community members they might know there that night. This surprised me greatly, as I was aware of the large numbers of people that enjoyed going to bingo in the community, and I assumed that part of this experience was seeing friends, chatting, and catching up on news. However, during the game, people are intently concentrating on the boards before them and the numbers being called; during the game intermission, people get up to stretch their legs, smoke, or get a snack, but they do not intermingle, staying with the small group of four or

³⁸To such an extent that at least three people told me that they consider bingo to be just one more kind of addiction. In the words of one woman, "you are still leaving your kids (to fend for themselves while you go play bingo), still spending your money" and using it as another kind of escape.

³⁹The two exceptions are Tuesday night TV bingo on the local access channel that people play in their homes and the occasional fund-raiser sponsored locally. In the latter case, people go door-to-door selling bingo cards and the numbers are called in *Innu-aimun* on the local radio station, but in neither situation do people leave their homes to play bingo together, in Sheshatshit, in one large communal space (although sometimes close relatives will get together in one person's living room or kitchen to have company while they play their cards).

five friends or relatives with whom they came to the game; and then, after the game is over for the evening, everyone streams through the door to make the trip back home with few if any waiting to talk to other friends or acquaintances with whom they did not ride into town with. I had expected that this shared interest in bingo would provide an animated atmosphere that would double as a social event, but found this not to be the case. It is not an occasion of shared activity and communal time but rather a concentrated individual effort. These impressions were confirmed by one woman in the community who is not a regular bingo player but had gone once on a lark with the encouragement of some of her friends who attend regularly:

One time I went to bingo, I really wasn't paying attention to playing, I wasn't into winning...instead, I was trying to go around and talk to people, but they weren't interested in talking because they were so busy playing...all I could see when I looked down the tables was the hands, going, going, going [as people marked their cards] (Grace, mid-forties)

Although the bingo games were not an opportunity for socializing as I had anticipated, it should be noted that they are a form of entertainment that relieves boredom and are something that a significant number of people look forward to. Also, they offer the chance to get out of the house, take a ride into the Valley, maintain contact with at least a small group of fellow bingo players, and occasionally, collect some extra money.

One other type of gathering space, frequented by adults from the age of 19 and up, is the three dancing bars in Goose Bay-Happy Valley. For many of my peers, "going out" is a much anticipated event, and a much more social one than bingo as people meet and talk with friends in the bars and dance in groups of friends on the dance floor. Some people would go out dancing two or three times a week, pending the availability of a lift to the Valley. Not only is the dancing bar scene a social place, preparations and planning for going out often entail complex negotiations for finding a ride by calling around to different friends and relatives, planning what to wear and wondering who else would be there that night. Going out is a relatively new phenomenon -- people to whom I spoke

told me that it is only within the past two or three years that going out dancing has become so popular. Although going out affords rich opportunity for social interaction and an enjoyable change from being stuck at home, it is not without its problems. A fair number of people in the community abstain from alcohol completely, and this carries over into the dancing bar setting. However, the ready availability of alcohol in the bar setting and an increasing supply of drugs in the Valley leads a certain number of people's evenings to end less than peacefully with fights, passing out, or a visit to the RCMP, consequently raising rather than relieving tensions within the community.

There are few other communal spaces for community members to meet, talk and interact in Sheshatshit. The Northern store and the post office across the river in North West River are places of contact where people might run into friends they have not seen in a while, but there is minimal fraternizing in these places and nowhere to sit down and visit. Hence, outside of the few exceptions noted, the majority of social interaction takes place not on a community level, but instead in houses with family members visiting one another's homes.

Another element of community life identified by various people involves co-operation or the lack of it in Sheshatshit:

Village life is very competitive...everything in the community is about comparisons...who makes the most money, who has the most education, who has the nicest cars...it's this whole inferiority-superiority thing. But the competition and one-up-manship in the community disappears in country -- in country everyone tries to do his or her best. For example, when the women go out and collect pine boughs for the tents, everyone does the best they can, but some people are better at it than others. But it doesn't make any difference who is faster or picks prettier boughs -- there is no sense of one person being more valuable than another, but rather an acceptance of people having different skills. (Rita, late thirties)

Transportation is one thing often shared between family members -- aunts, cousins, and parents are the people to turn to if you need to get somewhere and you need a lift or to borrow a vehicle, but very little other work is shared among family members in the

community. One exception to this seems to be preparations related to going in country like the canvas cutting for the tent I describe above. On the whole, activity in country is not only described as highly co-operative, but from what I observed, is experienced this way too. In this and many other ways, country living is in dramatic contrast to community life.

Country living

When talking about life in country, people would often compare it with life in the community in order to explain how it was different⁴⁰:

In country I see a lot of personal respect for one another which you don't see in the community as much. (Caroline, late forties)

When in country, you're there with your extended family, and you see each other every day, you talk to each other every day, all day. It's not like here in the community where you see each other much less frequently and where everyone is more or less isolated. (Rita, late thirties)

People...go to *nutshimit* mostly in the fall and spring. For some of us, it is a welcome break from our jobs in the community. We get away from our communities, and its problems like beer and crime. For many of us, going to *nutshimit* is a very important part of our lives. There are many good things about going to *nutshimit*. It is like we are going home when we go to the country. People go to get away from the white man's world. Some of us, especially the elders get upset when they can't go to *nutshimit*. (Innu Nation 1993:64)

Being in country is described as communal and connecting, unlike life in the community which is "isolating". This seems in part to be a consequence of the living arrangements as well as a change in atmosphere. For example, people move from living in houses in the community to tents in country. Both offer shelter and warmth, but entail distinctly unique living patterns. Tents are pitched close together and low to the ground which permits a

⁴⁰My thanks to Professor Colin Scott for pointing out to me that Tanner's (1979) work with the Mistassini Cree (another Algonquian group closely related to the Sheshatshit Innu) also delves into this dichotomy of community and country settings and indeed discusses it as a structural opposition.

great deal of regular contact between family members, especially as much work and activity takes place directly outside the living area, and indeed is part of it. There are no locks on tent openings, made also of canvas and much more permeable than the house doors in the community. Jokes and news travel quickly and easily between the thin canvas tent walls and many of the tasks needed to keep the camp going are shared and public rather than conducted within the confines of a house. As such, people interact differently in the two settings: in the community, visiting is more difficult and entails an effort; tasks like cooking are not often shared between households; wage labour is of an independent nature and people will often go days without seeing each other, perhaps only talking on the phone in the interim. In country, visiting and working towards common goals are inherent aspects of the time spent there and a part of the daily rhythm of life. People share fireplaces and hearths, food, and the work involved in preparing and cleaning up after a meal; talking, visiting and communication flow in a way that is not possible in the community. This is evidenced both in community discourse about what it feels like to be in country and in lived practice.

Other differences between the two settings of community and country were not always as easy for people to articulate, but their comments often centred around the distinctions in atmosphere and level of activity:

Being there [in country] feels good...it's hard to explain....there are no worries in country. (Joe, mid-thirties)

I'm more busy being in camp and away from the community; there are more things to keep us busy and we are always doing things for ourselves - there's stuff to do all day long for both me and my husband...I'm really happy away from the community and at peace with myself living away...I don't see any drunks there like in the community. (Katinin, early sixties)

People described themselves as feeling relaxed and peaceful in country, and the atmosphere of country life reflected these sentiments. The tension and anticipation

vanished; isolation was the exception rather than the norm. In contrast with the boredom in the community,

It's different in country -- each day is like an adventure, an exploration, and you see so much. It's like you took a walk each day in a new place -- think of how many new people you would see. (Scott, early twenties)

This young man's comments are closely aligned with the elders that Lacasse cites who missed seeing "constamment [des] endroits nouveaux en parcourant le pays" (Lacasse 1982:27), and reflects a recurring theme in the discourse about country life: purpose and movement while living there. Not only is there always something to be done and taken care of, there is always something new to see each and every day. People get up early and work hard all day long, but also enjoy what they are involved in and are satisfied by it, contrary to the pace of life in the community. People also spoke of how individuals who drink regularly while in the community and would be considered alcoholic do not drink when in country⁴¹ and how this added to a sense of security and calmness in the country setting that is not present in the community.

"Concrete shoes"

However, going in country is not as straight-forward as it might seem. Not everyone goes in country and not everyone thinks that spending time there is the answer to the issues at hand in the community:

People say that going in country is going to help you, but I watch people using country as a way to run away from their problems -- and that's not the answer either. You'll be in same situation when you come back if you don't deal with it [here first]. (Grace, mid-forties)

[There are some] people [in the community] who work, who have jobs and who don't like being in country...some people don't understand what it's

⁴¹See Wadden (1991) for other accounts of this change in reliance on alcohol depending the setting in which an individual is living.

like...some say that it is boring, but I don't know why -- there's always something to do in country, but for me, it's boring being in the community.

(Patrick, early thirties)

Going in country means going far away, and this is less tempting when people who are important in the family cannot come along. People who work cannot always go in country and are faced with choosing between spending time in country and the money earned at work. In addition, although the school now recognizes going in country as a valid absence, parents still have to choose between being in country with their children and the education that it affords versus the education in school. Conditions like this led one woman to tell me that "there are concrete shoes here in the community...it's not just easy to go".

Furthermore, although many young adults are quite knowledgeable about country ways and how to live in country, some younger people have not had the opportunity to learn country skills from their grandparents and parents, as there was a period of time in the recent past when fewer families were going in country. For some, this has become a source of tension:

Some young people feel anger and resentment because they feel like the older people let them down because they didn't take them in country and because they were drinking and became Christian. (Rita, late thirties)

[When we were in the camp,] I saw how disquieting it was for a young woman not to know which kind of boughs to pick⁴², and a young man who with his brother had a lot of trouble putting their tent up...they had done it plenty of times before with people older and more experienced than them, and they knew some things about how to do it, but they weren't used to doing it by themselves and it was really hard. (Caroline, late forties)

⁴²Women pick pine boughs and use them to carpet the floors of tents; a full, well-placed carpet is a critical element of a 'good' tent and women take great pride in keeping the boughs thick and fresh. The English term used to describe these boughs in Sheshatshit is "pine" but it has been pointed out to me by non-Innu that perhaps "spruce" or "balsam fir" are more taxonomically precise.

But at the same time, many people feel that it is these skills and knowledge that are the central part of what it means to 'be Innu':

Hunting is the last thing keeping our way of life alive and that's why it's so special. (Patrick, early thirties)

People take a great deal of pride in knowing how to live in country, and an increasing number of people are trying to learn and use the traditional skills, camping, hunting, and travelling in the same places as their ancestors many years before them. And yet, making the trip is not always so easy. Rita commented that "some people are afraid to make the leap and go out" because they do not feel comfortable in the country setting and have not learned all the skills they feel they should have:

We invited a young man, 25, 26 years old, to go out with us in country the last time we went, but he wouldn't come with us, even though I *know* that he wanted to...I think its because he was afraid to be there and not know what to do and afraid to be there and know less than kids a lot younger than him...he hasn't learned how to live in country and is afraid to try. (Rita, late thirties)

In June of 1992, the Mushuau Innu Band Council⁴³ and the Innu Nation held a People's Inquiry in Utshimassit after the tragic death of six children in a house fire, and compiled the results in a report entitled *Gathering Voices*. In it, community members speak out on a large number of issues facing Utshimassit and Innu in an attempt to redress them. Recently, the work has been published as *Gathering Voices: Finding Strength to Help Our Children* (1995), and covers many aspects of life today in Utshimassit, including both going in country and elements that prevent it. Some of the hindrances experienced in Utshimassit that people discuss in *Gathering Voices* are similar to those in Sheshatshit:

Some people are scared to go [in country]. They think they will be homesick. Others worry that their houses will be vandalized if they leave them. Sometimes people don't get support from their friends, boyfriends,

⁴³The Mushuau Innu are the Innu of Utshimassit (Davis Inlet)

girlfriends or families to go...some people fear unknown emergencies such as accidents could happen in *nutshimit*, or that they might get sick...some people don't go to the country because they are scared to lose their jobs, or their wife or husband is working. We have to look after our responsibilities that keep us in the community. It is very hard for us to throw that away...sometimes people with permanent jobs can't afford to go to the country. They can't get on social assistance to take three months to go out. They're not on UIC. Where would that three months' of money come from? (Innu Nation and Mushuau Innu Band Council 1995:163)

In addition, there is a sense among some of the community members I spoke with that the power and strength that "people in the old days" had is no longer accessible now that the world has changed. For example, the drum, once an essential element of Innu spirituality that permitted communication between hunter and animal spirits, is now played only by a few elder men, and the young men are not learning how to use it. One man I spoke with said that

...the genuine Innu identity and culture, like our own religion and drums [are being destroyed]. We don't use them [now] because we are not good enough hunters anymore. (Patrick, early thirties)

Other younger people I spoke with also gave the impression that using the drum properly entailed a certain amount of base knowledge that they did not have and could not access because it no longer exists in the way it once did.

Clearly, what going in country means and how it can be lived is a source of debate in Sheshatshit today. Yet for many people, knowing how to live in country and spending time in country remains an integral part of being Innu and maintaining cultural knowledge, but also is a sanctuary and refuge from the tensions and problems in the community.

Making the leap

The excitement of people preparing to go out in country is a palpable current that courses through the community when summer starts to turn to fall and then again when winter starts to turn to early spring. The mood shifts; the tension and nervous anticipation lift a bit and are replaced by a different kind of anticipation -- that of going in country.

People are talking about it; planning where to go; talking about who is going out this year and who is thinking about it; who to go with; what supplies to organize; what equipment to borrow or take out of storage from the basement; making new tents. Then there is the arranging for transportation, the waiting for the weather to be favourable, and finally, loading up the boat, the plane, or the skidoo and then, going. Both the preparations to go in country and then actually being there are a source of great and shared excitement that breaks the monotony of community life and renews people's sense of purpose. This impacts the community in a general sense as people get ready to go; but also has an effect on the family level (who's going? who's healthy enough to go?) and on an individual level (I'm leaving and going in country!).

The excitement about country is not limited to the time surrounding these preparations, but carries on throughout the country season. News travels back and forth from the community and the hunting camps via CB radio and by word of mouth. Who's got a lot of caribou? How is the hunting this year? What kind of animals are people seeing? What has the weather been like? What adventures and misadventures have people experienced? Although I have not yet had the chance to go in country during the fall or spring hunting seasons, I did spend a significant amount of time this summer with my host family at their campsite away from Sheshatshit at a place called *Metshideo* (North West Point, or more simply, the Point) that I described in the Introduction, and I spent a week at a fishing camp (at *Kanimesh*) accessible only by boat, and again quite removed from the community. These experiences fundamentally shaped how I understand the difference between the community and country settings. Equally important to this understanding however is what people told me about being in country and how they feel about going and then observing this activity and anticipation myself.

Ties that bind and nourish

Another essential element of country living is country food, and another reason people anticipate with pleasure the chance to be there⁴⁴. Country food is hunted food such as caribou, partridge, trout, salmon, and beaver, prepared in the traditional way and eaten with *innu-pakueshikan* (bannock). When available, it is also consumed in the community setting. For the family I stayed with, as well as many others, eating country food is still extremely important, and it composed a significant percentage of the weekly diet both in country and in the community. Lacasse documents the same phenomenon in Moisie:

Même si les (Innu) ne sont plus à présent des chasseurs de profession, il y a chez eux un attachement extraordinaire à la viande de gibier comme source d'alimentation et une valorisation très grande de la cuisine traditionnelle (1982:27)

Writing in a very different era, Speck also makes mention of Innu food preferences in his account, recounting that at that time, Innu avoided eating domesticated animals such as lamb, chicken, beef and pork whenever possible because

they realize...the impurity of these viands, and attribute their bodily ills, even the decline of their race, to the eating of domestic animals. The use of salt is also avoided in preparing pure wild meat⁴⁵. (1935:78)

Country food is spoken of as being stronger and healthier⁴⁶ :

In a country setting...the trust and the food is there, *healthy* food in *mutshimit*. (Agnes, late thirties)

We pay less for our food in *mutshimit*, and many of us say that country food is stronger. If you have enough wild game, you are not hungry, but if you buy

⁴⁴cf Rushforth (1977) in Watkins (ed) *Dene Nation: The Colony Within*

⁴⁵Disdain for using salt with country meats has faded and today it is an important seasoning in the preparation of most foods, both from the store and from the country. This dietary change, as well as a marked increase in the use of sugar, has led to significant health problems such as hypertension and diabetes (Lacasse 1982; Neuwelt et al 1992)

⁴⁶See also Borre (1991; 1994) for a discussion of the importance of seal meat and blood in Inuit discourse for maintaining health.

food at the stores, you are always hungry and you always want to eat as well.
(Innu Nation 1993:66)

[Les vieux] considèrent que la nourriture indienne⁴⁷ maintenait les Indiens en santé et en forme. (Lacasse 1982:27)

Although people in Sheshatshit eat store foods and bring some supplies with them in country, "la nourriture indienne" is still significant for people of all ages and especially for older people. In fact, for at least one elder in my host family, this principle included water as well as food -- he could only drink spring water as the tap water bothered him. The family would take trips out to a spring about ten miles from Sheshatshit to collect large buckets of this water for him. No-one questioned the necessity of this, but rather understood that it was healthier for him and accepted that as an older person who had lived many, many years in country he would need to drink country water.

Sharing country food is also a way of reaffirming ties within the family⁴⁸. People who have gone out in country will send caribou, fish, partridge, and beaver back to family members that have not been able to accompany them, and it is highly valued and appreciated by those left behind. As such, this sharing also becomes a way of connecting country space with community space.

Time and space

...the medicine and food we need, trees, water, plants, are all in the country and all that we need to heal. (Agnes, late thirties)

Nostalgia for the past is a potent indicator of conditions in the present. How the past is remembered can dramatically impact the present. Just as people in Sheshatshit talk

⁴⁷Lacasse's explanation of this term is: "(les animaux) qui se nourrissent dans la forêt sont appelés *innu-ueshish*, c'est-à-dire 'animaux indiens', et les animaux domestiques sont appelés *kakusseshiu-ueshish*, ce qui veut dire 'animaux blancs'" (1982:27).

⁴⁸The deep social significance of food, sharing food, and identity is certainly not limited to Innu. Flinn's (1990) account concerning Pulap identity demonstrates how "the production and exchange of local foods" (ibid:123) is an essential element in the assertion of contemporary Pulapese identity and that "sharing food both demonstrates kinship and symbolizes the sharing of land. In this way Pulapese are typical of Pacific Islanders, for whom kin relations and land are fundamental to identity" (ibid:107).

about country food in terms of good health, so too is the country setting itself spoken of in terms of health. Country space takes on almost mythic qualities in terms of its capacity to heal on the personal and community levels: "I see a lot of personal respect for one another which you don't see in the community as much"; "you see each other every day, you talk with each other every day, all day..."; "It's different in country..."; "being there feels good...it's hard to explain"; "people's way of thinking is different when out in the country...people are healthier...the healing for the Innu, I think, is in the country...". This association of country with health is particularly evident in the community discourse when people talk about the past. People would talk about how Innu in the past who lived in country used to be extremely strong and did not get sick, did not get cold easily, and could walk for long periods of time without becoming tired. Some people in the community described their ancestors who lived in "the old days" as having supernatural powers and skills that people these days can no longer access because they do not have enough knowledge or spiritual strength. In general, the community discourse describes country as a space where people in the old days were healthier and happier, such as in these examples:

But it didn't matter what would happen in country -- babies, people born in country, and we didn't need doctors -- in the past people were able to take care of each other, to help and support each other. (Katmin, early sixties)

People were hardly ever sick in the old days because we ate good food. Another reason that we were not sick is because there was never drinking going on in those days like there is today. As well, all our families used to be in the country all the time; we were very strong in *nutshimit* because we were physically active. We used to travel always on foot, with the canoe or toboggan. We did a lot of hard work. The only time people rested was on Sunday. (Innu Nation 1993:14)

The past is often idealized in the community discourse, and as country life was an integral element of the past, it too has become idealized⁴⁹. However, as the quotes above

⁴⁹Although country space is most often spoken of in highly positive terms and the excellent health and

indicate, this association of "health" with "country living" (and country food) is not limited to recollections about the past, but also extends to a present day vision of country as a healing or healthy place in opposition to the community life which is generally characterised as unhealthy and stagnant. In today's Sheshatshit, people talk not only about how they interact differently in the two settings, but also how the pace of life changes depending on which space one is in. There is an acute consciousness of these differences between the two spaces in the community discourse, and some people speak of feeling transformed while in country space. In this way, people are building on an idealized vision of the past to *infuse* the present with the mythic strength of the past; reanchoring themselves by calling on the past to find new strength for the present.

Strathern's recent work on nostalgia helps to critically assess these sentiments about country space. Strathern, basing her work on concepts borrowed from Battaglia (1995) distinguishes between two forms of nostalgia, "synthetic" and "substantive" but considers both to be different ways of "embodying the past in the present" (Strathern 1995:111). Synthetic nostalgia "mourns for what is missing from the present, and thus creates representations *of* the past as the place where what is gone was once present...the past is taken as a real pre-existing entity by virtue of its break from the present" (ibid:111-2). On the other hand, substantive nostalgia "evoke[s] the past" in such a way as to "recal[l] relationships already in place" (ibid:111). This she understands as

a way of making explicit the fact of origin, an attachment to a past that is and can only be realized in the present. The origin of the act does not, as it were, exist till the act is done...the past is the substance of (present) relationships: it is, so to speak, being acted out now...the constitution of the past in the present, the enacting of obligations because a *prior relationship* exists (ibid:111-2;emphasis in original).

strength of ancestors who lived in country year round referred to, the difficulties and dangers of life in the bush have not been forgotten.

As such, substantive nostalgia is more than a romanticization of what one "was" or what one had. It is a reconstruction of the past by bringing it into the present, "an attachment that is and can only be realized in the present". The feelings expressed to me by many Innu about being in country are not limited to remembrances of the past but instead manifest a feeling about the strength and power of country space for today that comes in part from how the past is remembered.

Strathern's example of family gatherings that she uses to introduce her ideas on nostalgia apply equally well to notions of country space. She notes that one

might observe, for instance, that twentieth-century Euro-Americans who pursue their personal genealogies to find some originating location for their family are using them as their own parents or grandparents might have used them. However, it is a recent phenomenon...to turn such findings into 'family gatherings'. Such gatherings acknowledge what people take to be modern conditions of living - they expect to be geographically scattered through migration, occupation, or lifestyle. There is nothing traditional about getting everyone together *for such reasons*, though the endeavor echoes tradition (family gatherings at festivals or life crises)...(ibid:101)

Likewise, there is nothing traditional about going in country for the purposes of healing the wounds of social suffering although today's trips in country echo the 'old days' in form if not wholly in substance (when families' subsistence depended on the land and on country skills). Yet within the contemporary discourse about country that links it with healing, there is an explicit reference to the past and to tradition as a source of strength. As such, the nostalgia for country and the past within the community discourse has been reshaped in conjunction with present day needs (addressing severe social conditions) and within the present day context (seasonal trips in country) to mean something new (healing) while at the same time referring to the past.

Battaglia also discusses the notion of nostalgia and elaborates upon its potential for the future rather than its implications for conceptions of past or present. As she writes, "it is important...to detach the notion of nostalgia from the merely sentimental attitude with which we may too easily associate it" (1995:77) and that we should consider

instead how "nostalgia may in fact be a vehicle of knowledge, rather than only a yearning for something lost" (1995:77). For Battaglia, nostalgia is strength, and a

nostalgia for a sense of future - for an experience, however imaginary, of possessing the means of controlling the future - may function as a powerful force for *social reconnection*. In permitting creative lapses from dominant realities, it is such a nostalgia that enables or recalls to practice more meaningful patterns of relationship and self-action (1995:78; emphasis added)

This insight is highly relevant to the nostalgia involved in the discourse about country space. Not only has the meaning of country living been reshaped and mobilized to address contemporary community concerns, it is most emphatically a movement for and towards the future. It is also a way of creating a space in which to escape from destructive patterns and instead rebuild individual and interpersonal strength and reinforce social connections by referring to the past.

The notion of "space" itself is an enigmatic one, but clearly central to this discussion. Until a short while ago, limited anthropological attention had been paid to using space as an element of inquiry, but two recent articles (Rodman 1992; Gupta and Ferguson 1992) introduce place and space as problematized concepts. Rodman "explores ways in which place, like voice and time, is a politicized social and cultural construct" (1992:640) and emphasizes that

places are not inert containers. They are politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions...Places have multiple meanings that are constructed spatially. The physical, emotional, and experiential realities places hold for their inhabitants at particular times need to be understood apart from their creation as the locales of ethnography (ibid:641)

In community discourse, country and community settings are experientially and emotionally distinct spaces where the same social actors interact in vastly different ways. Rodman asks us to "look 'through' these places, explore their links with others, consider why they are constructed as they are, see how places represent people, and begin to understand how people embody places" (ibid:652). I would add that we must also look to

how places embody and affect social relations as they are not "inert containers" but indeed can hold richly nuanced significance, as does country space for many Innu as a sanctuary and a place of wellness.

Gupta and Ferguson (1992) are concerned with the various problems that arise from the "assumed isomorphism of space, place, and culture"(1992:7) and posit that culture can no longer be conceptualized as if mapped onto physical spaces but instead demands a more flexible approach that includes "exploring the processes of production of difference in a world of culturally, socially, and economically interconnected and interdependent spaces" (ibid:14). The authors also begin to explore the power of space and place:

remembered places have often served as symbolic anchors of community for dispersed people...'homeland' in this way remains one of the most powerful unifying symbols for mobile and displaced peoples...we need to give up naive ideas of communities as literal entities...but remain sensitive to the profound 'bifocality' that characterizes locally lived lives in a globally interconnected world, and the powerful role of place in the 'near view' of lived experience (ibid:11)

Most Innu are not transnationals nor "mobile and displaced peoples" in exactly the sense that Gupta and Ferguson allude to. However, they have in many ways been *dispossessed* of control over their own destiny and disenfranchised from the hegemonic society that grew up around them and then subsequently marginalized them.. In response, country *space*, a concrete but also symbolic place, is being mobilized in community discourse as an anchor to recentre and refocus community strength. Community life and country life are not polar opposites, but instead compose complementary parts of contemporary life in Sheshatshit. People live in both settings and move between them, but when they talk about being in country, they speak of a wholly distinct time and space from that of the community. Communal, family and individual lives are now subject to vastly different pressures than when living on the land was a necessity for Innu, but country space is a

deeply emotionally significant space in the life of many community members due to the new ways in which it is being mobilized.

CHAPTER FOUR

Notions of Healing

The healing process that people are trying to go through [leads to] many methods and some are going through in their own ways; some see strength and encouragement in older people; some find strength in getting involved in community activities, protests; being part of something that is being born. (William, late thirties)

As more and more people in Sheshatshit began talking to me about community healing it became clear that the term carries a richness of meaning that can also vary dramatically from individual to individual, corresponding with their particular world of reference. Politicians, counsellors, people who have gone to treatment programmes and community members at large shared similar concepts of some aspects of community healing, but were in conflict on others. This holds true for both people's thoughts on what healing "is" and how healing should (or could) best happen. As indicated in the previous chapter, local discourse often links healing with being in country. However, community healing is not limited to this realm. Healing is also spoken of in conjunction with the wide range of intervention programmes available in Sheshatshit for people seeking help with addressing issues such as addictions, abuse, and family violence. The Health Commission of the Innu Nation sponsors two of these programmes: Healing Services and the Alcohol and Drug Abuse counsellors. The government of Newfoundland and Labrador sponsors the third: Social Services. Although all three agencies share the common goal of helping people and families become healthier by addressing abuse and addiction, Healing Services⁵⁰ and Social Services operate under distinct mandates and employ different methods. In general terms, Healing Services workers spend most of their time making

⁵⁰Although both Healing Services and the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counsellors have different mandates, they operate under the umbrella of the same parent organization and share the same general treatment philosophy and approach. Consequently, for the purposes of this section, I will not discriminate between the two programmes. When referring to "Healing Services", I am including the Drug and Alcohol Treatment programme.

home visits, attending court cases, and compiling community assessments⁵¹ of Innu offenders for the courts; the Alcohol and Drug abuse counsellors meet with clients trying to break addictions; Social Services workers focus on cases of abuse and violence and removing children and victims from harmful situations and pressing charges against offenders. Both are staffed with Innu women and men as well as a few non-Innu who have married into the community, and most of the workers have completed training in their areas of expertise. I shall elaborate upon the differences in these programmes further along in this chapter.

Initially, I saw country and intervention programmes as distinct types of healing, but eventually came to understand that they overlap and intertwine. In this chapter, I present these orbits of discourse about what community healing "is" in Sheshatshit, how people envision community healing happening, and show how each is experienced on the individual, community and greater political levels.

Talking

Time after time, "talking" was described to me as a crucial element of healing. This theme was one of the few related to community healing that a wide variety of people consistently mentioned. The individuals I quote below come from all categories of community members that I spoke with: counsellors⁵², older people, younger people, politicians⁵³, people having attended external treatment programmes, and community members at large:

⁵¹Healing Services produces a community assessment for each sex offender on trial or in jail by interviewing about four people in the community who know the individual in question -- parents, partners, family members, or counsellors who have worked with the person. The opinions voiced by these people close to the accused are then summarized and presented by a Healing Services worker to the presiding judge. Included as well in this document is a recommendation from Healing Services as to what "the community" feels is best for the victim, the person accused, and the family at that particular juncture.

⁵²Counsellors for either Healing Services, the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Centre, Social Services, or the Group Home.

⁵³By this categorization I am referring to people associated with either the Innu Nation or the Band Council, but who are not necessarily elected representatives.

Healing means working towards a healthy community, family, children...one way [of doing this] is to *talk* -- talk about your feelings and your pain and handing [back the pain] to those who have hurt you, and not keeping it in...(Grace, mid-forties)

Innu culture has been so different from non-native culture and I think that the only thing that will work is if four or five families would go in country and talk with each other about what is the problem [that they are experiencing] and why it's happening -- get together like this in a group and work together to figure it out...people don't have a chance to talk usually but if they have a chance to get together and say what is wrong and what is bothering them and talk within the tents and between the tents, talk and listen and see what they have done wrong and what causes it to be a problem. Other than that, I don't think much is going to help...(Katmin, early sixties)

Part of healing for me was talking about my own abuse, my own feelings, talking about what my husband used to do to me (Hannah, late thirties)

Outside treatment centres are a waste of money that we don't have...all people have to do is decide that they want to go in country with their family or four or five families and work things out face to face (Nina, late thirties)

[Four years ago, Grace faced her own sexual abuse and talked to someone about what she was remembering and what had happened to her. She was afraid that she would be abandoned; that people wouldn't want to have anything to do with her once they knew that she had been abused; She felt worse after talking about it for the first time than she had before she started talking]--

but you have to continue talking until you feel better...it's hard work and is going to take a lot of time for this community to heal...but you have to go through that pain. It's hardest when a priest or elder has abused you because you are supposed to respect them... (Grace, mid-forties)

I stopped drinking six years ago, and started going to AA meetings to try and heal my family...We⁵⁴ go to AA meetings and share our problems and talk about our pain. (Hannah, late thirties)

Healing means to let out the stuff that is eating you up inside (Agnes, late thirties)

⁵⁴Hannah is referring not to her family, but to the people in attendance at AA meetings.

The Innu Nation, the Health Commission, the Band Council, the Alcohol counsellors have all tried to get people to acknowledge that there is a problem and it needs to be addressed...not just by organizations, but by individuals, too (William, late thirties)

Healing in part is telling the past, present, and future...people have to stop hiding things -- the only way you can heal is to *tell* it-- tell it, don't hide it, so you won't have to carry it around with you. If you don't talk, you carry the sickness with you. (Josiah, mid-forties)

Given the community atmosphere described in Chapter Three that is coloured by tension, isolation, and avoidance of confrontation, *talking* about the pain of abuse and about severely strained family relationships is a dramatic shift in social interactions in Sheshatshit. Previously, I posited that the silence and the maintenance of social distance that I sensed in Sheshatshit are devices to limit the emotional damage caused by profound pain in a closely knit community. Avoidance of these issues (especially abuse incurred by family members) may limit immediate damage, but there is a price to pay for blocking such intense pain. Instead, these excerpts portray a growing belief in Sheshatshit that talking about abuse, talking about feelings, and talking about past events that have been buried is what will eventually permit a healing of the community fabric. Rather than avoiding painful topics, a sentiment is growing within the community that an open airing of this pain is an essential part of the healing process, not only for the individuals involved in a specific case, but for the whole community. The idea is that individuals who talk about what has happened to them are helping themselves heal while simultaneously lending strength to others who have not yet been able to talk but who might benefit from seeing that they are not alone in their pain.

The talking that people speak of is not necessarily what an outsider might expect; it is not talking in the sense of psychotherapy or counselling with a therapist. Instead, the talking people refer to can mean confiding in a trusted friend, talking with a Healing Services or Social Services worker, or telling their story at a more public place such as at an AA meeting. Indeed, people who describe themselves as "in healing" are making

talking a more and more public process. For example, during my stay in Sheshatshit, the Innu Nation Health Commission sponsored a plenary three day session called 'Healing Visions'. This meeting brought people in the community involved in health care and intervention programmes together to discuss community healing and health in Sheshatshit. The majority of people there were Innu, with a few non-Innu who are involved in local health care delivery also in attendance. I was not invited to sit in on these meetings, but one person in attendance recounted to me how the sessions evolved into a series of personal testimonies whereby person after person described in detail his or her own personal history of abuse or alcoholism. Some people (non-Innu) in attendance became frustrated with this heavy emphasis on "talking" and after saying so, were censured by other participants (Innu intervention workers) who insisted that everyone who wanted to share their stories should be permitted to speak for as long as they felt necessary as it was an important element of the speakers' healing process. Thus, talking can happen in a variety of places and at a variety of levels, spanning the range of one-on-one to increasingly public forums. It appears that some people begin to talk about what has happened to them by telling just one or two people, but that once a person is "in healing", they begin to talk about what has happened to them more and more publicly and encourage others to do the same.

Talking can be the sharing of personal experiences for the first time and the airing of personal pain; in other contexts, it can also mean confronting an abuser. Again, as described in Chapter Three, confrontation is generally not how people resolve conflict in Sheshatshit under normal circumstances. However, some of the Healing Services workers that I spoke with feel that the tactic of confrontation (whereby the victim confronts the abuser with what has transpired between them) is highly therapeutic for the people involved and that by sitting down together and making vocal what had been silent, individuals and families can begin to reconcile and mend. As we shall see below, this particular approach follows within the Healing Services mandate, whereas other groups

(such as Social Services) appropriate the same sentiment for talking and use it in a slightly different way according to their own objectives.

Talking as a mechanism for healing also reflects the discourse concerning the differences in community and country spaces. Although much airing of personal pain has been done in the community, it is not necessarily the place most conducive to it. Katnin's comments earlier highlighted this point: "I think that the only thing that will work is if...families would go in country and talk with each other about what is the problem and why it's happening...and work together to figure it out" because in the community "people don't have a chance talk usually". Talking about events and feelings that are extremely delicate, far-reaching and that have been hidden for a long time is not easy, especially in a community atmosphere that is already burdened with a sense of isolation and hiding. Country space on the other hand is a sheltering space, a haven of sorts, where people feel at ease and where talking is facilitated. In the context of talking as healing, these qualities of country space are being remobilized to permit a fruitful disentangling of difficult and painful issues in a positive way.

Intervention programmes in Sheshatshit

As mentioned above, there are two main intervention programmes in Sheshatshit operating under distinct and separate mandates: Healing Services and Social Services. Because of the divergence in their mandates, a certain amount of discord has arisen between proponents for the two programmes. Examining this debate and the differences community members perceive between the two groups permits me to in turn draw out a number of significant points as to how people conceptualize community healing. Significantly, the discourse surrounding this debate also illuminates other aspects of community healing that are linked with issues of Innu collective identity and how it is being defined.

Healing Services is....

Three years ago, community members met with the Social Services workers to discuss an escalating rate of disclosures of sexual abuse and family violence within the community. People who were at this meeting recounted to me how the general feeling at the meeting was that a support network was essential to help people going through this process, and about 20 people volunteered to work as counsellors. This informal team eventually grew into the Innu Nation's Healing Services which now has five full-time workers and no longer relies on volunteers. Healing Services is comprised of one director and four other full-time workers. Two workers prepare community assessments for people on parole and those who have been incarcerated; the other two workers focus on home visits: visiting clients in their homes to mediate and offer support. When I asked Healing Services workers and other community members what needs the Healing Services programme filled, people emphasized a variety of roles that Healing Services acts in:

Healing Service workers are available if someone is depressed and needs someone to talk to...Healing Services workers do home visits to people...they are also involved in court cases. On weekends and nights, Healing Services workers are also always on call if there is a crisis situation...but sometimes Innu people are afraid of each other...[and Healing Services workers] have to be careful and see when the people need the support [and when they might not want to talk]. But anyone who wants support from Healing Services can ask for it and we will try to help. (Agnes, late thirties)

People often come as adults to Healing Services, but the abuse was 20, 30, or 40 years ago...People might come and say that they want to sit down with the person and confront the person that abused them... Healing Services will arrange it -- or sometimes the offender comes and wants to sit down with the person they hurt and try to make amends. The victim never has to go through these confrontations alone if it happens through Healing Services.

(Norma, early-forties)

In this respect, Healing Services offers direct support for any community members seeking help with their problems, both in crisis situations such as during initial

recognition of abuse or suicide attempts and also more long-term support for depression or helping individuals or families work through traumatic experiences:

[Healing Services offers] a staff to deal with people who are seeking out support. A Healing Services volunteer group was first set up...if someone disclosed abuse, often they felt as though they are the only ones ever in that situation and afraid that they would be ostracized, hated and condemned...but as more and more people came out [with their stories of being abused], they saw that Innu people were welcoming them back...this *reconciliation* [of abuser or abused within the community] has become an important way of Innu life. The volunteers had a very informal structure, but their main goal was to be supportive, and many of them may have gone through the same sorts of thing. Healing Services facilitates this process of reconciliation. (William, late thirties)

[During home visits,] the Healing Services worker is just there to listen; the clients need support, and the worker's role is just to be there and know they can count on you. (Agnes, late thirties)

Within this discourse about Healing Services, there is a strong emphasis on reconciliation and support as methods to mend family and community relations. Reconciliation is especially important, and is achieved through family-based counselling, confrontation of the past, and talking about the trauma that has been experienced, rather than reporting and prosecuting offenders:

I do not believe in the white legal system and the way it deals with offenders and with its emphasis on punishment. Family Healing Circles, Sentencing Circles, and Mobile Treatment are the most effective ways to address offenders and to avoid future problems...put the justice system aside; look to family therapy groups. Bring the family together and talk in the presence of a counsellor. (Josiah, mid-forties)

Indeed, Innu experiences with the justice system, an outside institution, was one of the contributing factors in the establishment of Healing Services:

Healing Services has only existed for a year; it stemmed from people going through the justice system [and needing help negotiating the process]. One element of Healing Services now is to provide reports to the courts on the backgrounds of people's lives and to help the judge see more of the person standing before him...Healing Services focuses on conflict resolution and mediation; we want Innu to help themselves within their families with the

support and presence of a counsellor...[this] helps people talk about what has happened to them and helps them let go...part of talking is a clearing up of old issues by using mediation to bring a more complete closure to these issues. (Caroline, late forties)

Healing Services also does something called "PDRs" or Predisposition Reports, which is a history of the offender. It helps the judge to get background of the person's life and understand better the Innu person. Interviews with people in the offender's life helps you see how these people perceive the offender, what he was like when growing up, what he has been through himself. This is then presented to the judge so he can make a better and maybe fairer sentence. From the perspective of Healing Services, the first step in addressing abuse and violence is to try and work with people involved before it goes to court...(Norma, early-forties)

Healing Services workers help Innu people negotiate the justice system by acting as mediators between the courts and Innu that have been accused of violence or abuse. The Healing Services workers that function in this capacity are attempting to reintroduce something of the community reality and the social context in which the offenders live back into the justice system by compiling predisposition reports and community assessments. In this manner, community members can insert something of themselves into an alienating process that deeply affects their community structure, but that was formerly completely directed by outside, non-Innu, forces. This involvement also permits a vocalization of dissatisfaction with the justice system and its impact on community and family life:

I don't like incarceration as a solution to wrong-doings or abuse...it separates the person from the community and their family. (Caroline, late forties)

Punishment is not everything...it doesn't solve problems like sitting together, facing each other and talking does. These ways are more meaningful. (Norma, early forties)

The subtext of this discourse is that the White justice system is not the Innu way and does not address Innu community needs. The justice system is described as prolonging the trauma experienced by families already trying to deal with abuse and violence without ever providing a chance for the underlying pain and emotion to be resolved, especially for the

victim. A number of community members are saying that what is needed instead of punishment is reconciliation that comes with "sitting together, facing each other and talking..." and not with prosecution. Furthermore, given the larger political context of moving towards self-determination and self-governance, inserting an Innu voice and perspective into the courts is not only a way of healing the families involved but also a way of taking back control of community affairs and dealing with them inside the community⁵⁵ instead of through Newfoundland's courts, as William's comments below elaborate:

People used to think that family violence and abuse were an individual's problem, but the Innu Nation started realizing that Innu in the past have tried to deal with problems as a collective *and* that violence affects the community as a whole, that family violence is not isolated to two individuals...it's a community not an individual problem...the Innu Nation is elected by the people and is obligated to *help* the people...it created a support system for people interested in dealing with those problems. [Healing Services offers] a staff to deal with people who are seeking out support...Healing Services works with people who are prepared to admit to their problem instead of denying or looking for a way out...I personally believe that the Innu Nation is going about this in the right way...these are *our* problems and the court isn't going to solve anything. *Our* problems and we need to deal with them and as long as there are people prepared to deal with them, by all means we should.

(William, late thirties)

By calling on the past ("the Innu Nation started realizing that Innu in the past have tried to deal with problems as a collective), a sense of Innu identity based on a concept of 'Innu ways' as distinct from 'white ways' is evoked and strengthened.

Social Services is...

Social Services operates under a provincial mandate from the government of Newfoundland and is obligated to follow the standardised protocol outlined for all Social Services branches in the province. Although the workers at Social Services share the

⁵⁵See Andrew and Sarsfield (1985) for a discussion of self-determination and health care in Sheshatshit.

same concerns as Healing Services' workers of eradicating abuse and ending family violence, they operate under different restraints and utilize different methods of conflict resolution. For example, some of the Social Services staff are involved in working in an "Anger Management programme" with Innu inmates at the correctional centre in Goose Bay. As it was described to me, this is an method of working through old memories and hurts by teaching clients how to "focus their anger on the person that hurt them...you sit down with the person that hurt or abused you (by visualizing that they are there, even if they are not physically present)" and "you get very angry, scream, yell, hit, get your anger out". This process is "very tiring" but focuses and directs the hurts in a more constructive direction than inward or than "getting angry with your kids, your husband, your wife, but instead with the person hurting you". This method of therapy brings the client back into the situation where abuse happened in his or her own life and asks the client to re-experience the past and release pent up emotions. In many ways, this technique reflects the emphasis on talking as a move towards healing that was discussed above. Both encourage people to "work through their pain" and problems by expressing them and making them public in a purging catharsis rather than keeping them inside.

Although Healing Services and Social Services attempt to address the same sorts of social problems and valorize some of the same general therapeutic techniques (such as opening up and talking about past events as important elements of healing), there are also significant differences between the two programmes' approaches. Specifically, Social Services workers are obliged to work within the criminal justice system and to report cases of abuse that they discover to the RCMP:

Social Services has a policy of reporting and Healing Services doesn't...Social Services is linked to the provincial government and is mandated for child protection and welfare...Social Services is part of a huge bureaucracy but Healing Services is under the Innu Nation, and its mandate comes from the Innu Nation and the community...Social Services does not have resources or programmes for people to seek long-term on-going help from...It's just crisis-management. Healing

Services is trying to start working on the underlying problems and help people deal with their life situations so that they won't repeat the behaviour. (Caroline, late forties)

There is conflict with Social Services and Healing Services...I have had a very hard time trying to work with them because they split people apart...It's very sad to see your own people without information that they've been charged and why...the family, the wife, the kids need to know. (Agnes, late thirties)

There are different opinions about Healing Services and Social Services in the community...the Social Services policy is that anyone admitting to sexual abuse or anyone hearing of disclosure must report it to the authorities. People got accustomed to reporting [cases of abuse] and putting Innu people through the court process. (William, late thirties)

As such, Social Services workers can effect immediate assistance for community members by quickly ending on-going abuse and by removing children from dangerous living conditions, but they are not in the position to exercise personal discretion as to whether removal is the best solution in a given case. Healing Services workers, who do not have to answer to Newfoundland's criminal justice system, have much more leeway in this respect. They have more liberty to use their judgement about what a particular child and family needs and can recommend a number of different solutions without necessarily separating the family in crisis.

The criticism that Social Services workers have received for their programme's approach to resolving community problems again helps to illuminate what healing means for community members. As the excerpts above indicate, the main criticisms of Social Services' methods are that not only does it rely too heavily on outside intervention to solve internal community problems, but that the procedure it follows of reporting cases of abuse and violence ruptures rather than reconciles interpersonal relationships within the community. Instead of trying to rebuild grievously injured relationships through talking, confrontation, and working towards long-term solutions, prosecution is seen by some as aggravating the violence and damage that has already been done:

Healing Services' position is that they need to work with the people involved before it goes to the next step, either of increased violence, or of the judicial system. Healing Services is not trying to cover stuff up, but to fix things. Also, it can become very messy if the offender is incarcerated and then tries to re-enter the community, especially if he comes back with the attitude that 'I've paid for the abuse with three months in jail...why should I sit down with you now?'... [Furthermore,] there is no satisfaction for the victim if the offender denies all the charges and then it is only the court that finds him guilty. (Norma, early forties)

However, not everyone I spoke with agreed. Some Social Services workers feel that there are not enough resources within the community for Healing Services to effectively accomplish what it has set out to do and hence that their priority should be stopping abuse. Furthermore, Healing Services has both victims of abuse *and* abusers coming to them for help. Because of this, some Healing Services workers have at times found themselves in the difficult position of trying to resolve a case of abuse on behalf of an abuser when the victim is not yet ready to deal with what has happened:

Some people say that there is something wrong with Healing Services and the Innu Nation and some people are saying that they're working for the offender and not for the victim. (William, late thirties)

But, as William continues,

the Innu Nation never intended to focus on the offenders...it was trying to prevent the court process that is alien to many people...it's a very adversarial process, and people continued to *deny* the charges to avoid jail. And when people returned to the community, there was no healing, no reconciliation between the victim and the offender. (William, late thirties)

One Social Services worker mirrors these concerns in her comments about the differences between Healing Services and Social Services:

If there were enough resources to help both victims and victimizers in the community, I wouldn't report cases of abuse like I do now, but I still feel that victimizers still deny the abuse that has occurred, and feel that (Healing Services) cannot work with victimizers -- the victimizers cannot communicate with Social Services because Social Services has to report cases of sexual, physical, and verbal abuse to the RCMP.

Once the victimiser admits they have a problem, that's one thing, but most do not want to admit or want help. The case then goes to court once reported and it gets decided there.

In this person's opinion, trying to help both parties involved in a case of abuse is not in itself offensive, but Healing Services is not always adequately equipped to resolve the conflicts that it intends to because abusers are often in denial and will not take responsibility for what they have done. As such, the most important task then becomes to stop the abuse in any way possible, even if it means resorting to the courts.

Clearly, there is no definitive consensus among community members as to what method or approach towards community healing is most effective, both on an immediate or long-term basis. These answers are being negotiated as the process of healing evolves. Social Services workers are obligated to report cases of abuse and violence; Healing Services workers try to deal with the same sorts of situations through confrontation and family-based counselling. In turn, this basic difference in policy between Healing Services and Social Services expands the discourse on community healing from the family and community levels onto the greater political level as it intersects with issues of self-determination and Innu conflicts with the justice system.

Furthermore, the debate surrounding effective and appropriate ways of dealing with these issues is not limited to discussions about local level intervention programmes. A growing number of community members have attended *external* treatment programmes. These programmes are now another element of the same general debate among community members, and again leads people to ask themselves what are appropriate ways of community healing and what is a distinctly Innu approach to healing.

External resources

In an attempt to address a range of difficult issues, most often stemming from alcoholism, violence, or abuse, some community members have sought assistance from outside Sheshatshit at external treatment centres. Rather than working through problems

in the community, participation in these programmes involves leaving Sheshatshit for anywhere from one to three months in order "to go for treatment". Most people I spoke with about their experiences at the centres had attended either Brentwood in Windsor, Ontario or Poundmaker's Lodge in Edmonton, Alberta, although there are many other centres in existence throughout Canada. These treatment centres aim to break people of their addictions as well as to help them understand the greater issues in their lives that need attention in order to 'stay clean' and free of the addictions. For some people, going through this process is where healing can begin. The first person in Sheshatshit to attend an external treatment programme went about seven years ago to Poundmaker's Lodge and since that time, external treatment programmes have become increasingly accepted by community members as a way to start healing.

The majority of treatment centres in Canada are geared to people of all backgrounds and with many different needs, such as Brentwood where the treatment modules are based on dominant cultural values. Poundmaker's Lodge on the other hand is unique in that its "programmes and resources are developed from an Aboriginal point of view...operated for aboriginals by aboriginals. This Aboriginal experience is fundamental to the success of (the) programmes" (Nechi Institute and Poundmaker's Lodge 1995). Thus, the premise of the two programmes varies by what cultural base they call upon, but the basic treatment agendas appear to be quite similar for both programmes:

I have been sober for three years now...going into treatment taught me how to rid myself of the anger and rage that built up from growing up in a dysfunctional family...I used to vent the anger on women, lose it in booze, or in fights, but now I have learned from treatment how to get rid of it in a good way and not explode it onto someone else...I've learned how to be a good person, how to care for another person and how to love in a good way...I've gotten my trust back. (Joey, mid twenties)

I was at Brentwood for seven weeks, and everyone was real friendly. I used to fight a lot when I was drinking...at Brentwood everyone's in there for help, and you get into groups to share your stories with each other. You feel better when you talk and get all your skeletons out of

the closet...I started to learn about what makes me mad, what makes me angry. I dealt with my fighting and anger, but my drinking is still there...I got through some of my shit, but, like, I didn't hit rock bottom. But now, if I get mad, I go to talk to people now instead of just letting it build up and up and letting it explode on someone. (Mark, early twenties)

I went into treatment for my drinking problem and I had never attributed it to any issues like my childhood...I never thought I *had* any issues -- I thought that being abused or giving abuse was just part of life and that life sucked...[while at Brentwood] I dealt with my issues, mostly sexual abuse issues, abuse I had received. You get a high from treatment -- your life is grounded again and you are where you want to be...I didn't want to come back [to Sheshatshit] because I knew that once I was back here I wouldn't have support like at Brentwood and that I would have to confront my relationships with my family and with my friends that I had drunk with and grown up with...At Brentwood, I had to relearn everything and get back to the basics -- communication, sharing...being open and respecting yourself. (Noah, late twenties)

Here again we see an emphasis on talking as therapeutic. People are encouraged to talk about what has happened to them in their lives and encouraged to talk in public arenas (such as in discussion groups) where people share their life stories. Clients void themselves by recounting their pasts and then "learn" how to rebuild themselves into healthier people, defined in part as capable of maintaining positive relationships and able to handle difficult situations without resorting to old coping mechanisms such as violence or alcohol.

One man described for me the daily pattern at Brentwood as "at 7, you get up and do chores...by 9 the treatment groups start; lunch at 12; group work and lectures starting after lunch at 1pm, quiet time in the afternoon for a bit; dinner; then evening sessions...". When asked if this seemed strict or regimented, he replied that

It didn't feel like prison at all--I felt at home, my first home ever...because you have rules at home and when I was growing up there was no discipline, just abuse...there was no hugging, touching, love in my childhood, and Brentwood taught me how to do these things in a supportive way...when I was down, everybody there (at the centre) was there for me...(Noah, late twenties)

For these people, treatment programmes have played a significant part in their lives and helped them regain self-confidence and build a sense of personal control. However, there is a growing concern among other community members that these external treatment programmes are not wholly appropriate ways to approach community healing and a significant number of people expressed to me their fears about seeing an addictive reliance on the programmes themselves growing in the community. For some people involved in local politics, going to treatment is a surface solution that does nothing to address the real root of the social problems facing Sheshatshit that stem from the colonialization of the Innu. That is to say that both the issues facing the community and people's attempts to heal are not simply of an individual nature, but take place within a macrocontext of social suffering that affects the collective social body:

Healing can be through medicine, but the more serious form [of healing] for the Innu is healing the effects of contact with Europeans and all the social problems of living in a community with sexual abuse, violence and alcohol, the worse disease the Innu has ever had.

We must look at what things we are trying to heal *from*, like colonization, assimilation...Healing is not like a cut with a bandage and after a while it's gone, it's healed; to me, healing is forever...the pain and suffering Innu have gone through will be in their minds forever, like the Jews in the Holocaust. (William, late thirties)

Other community members with a less politicized view of the situation believe that the root of the community's problems is alcohol and that the abuse and the violence stem directly from the drinking:

I wonder why people can't see the problems they are creating in their own family and their own lives when they are drinking heavily...I see all the things happening in the community -- sexual abuse, physical abuse, child abuse -- that all comes from alcohol. I believe that the parents could stop acting like this if they were sober -- all that could be prevented if the drinkers would realize that drinking is the *cause* of all this pain...(Katrin, early sixties)

Seemingly then, this woman would feel that treatment centres with their emphasis on breaking addictions and alcoholism were beneficial. Instead, she and a variety of other

people concurred with the sentiments expressed above that reliance on external treatment programmes was *negatively* impacting the community, but for different reasons:

I believe that people can stop drinking without going to treatment centres and that sending people to treatment centres is just a waste of money because they can help themselves... (Katnin, early sixties)

The Innu need Innu healing ways, not the treatment centres as much because they're Euro-Canadian and external. (Nathan, mid-thirties)

External treatment centres are a waste of money that we don't have...all that people have to do is decide that they want to go in country with their family or four or five families and work things out face to face. (Nina, late thirties)

I really disagree with treatment centres, with sending our own kids out [to them]. That's not the Innu way, and it should be dealt with *here*. (Agnes, late thirties)

In these excerpts, a certain dissatisfaction with external programmes emerges because whether following the Brentwood (dominant culture) or Poundmaker's (pan-Indian) model, external treatment centres are "a waste of money" and "not the Innu way". Within community discourse, "the Innu way" of solving social problems is coming to mean reducing social isolation and approaching the issues as a collective, rather than sending individuals away to deal with their problems by themselves. Yet, at the same time within this rubric of healing as a collective process, there is an emphasis on the importance of an *individual's* decision to heal and make changes:

In order to be strong, you have to do it by yourself, from your heart...to quit drinking you have to use your heart, to realize what the alcohol is doing to you... (Patrick, early thirties)

It's their own bodies and they have to learn how to retrain their own body if they want to have a better life...People need to make up their own minds to get away from [the drinking]. (Katnin, early sixties)

Healing and treatment...that's all a bunch of crap. If something's wrong with you, you just need to make a decision to change from inside and then you can beat it... (Frank, early twenties)

Healing must be *internal* and takes place on a very personal level and must unite a healthy mind, body and spirit...the soul, self-respect and dignity must be preserved and strengthened... (Paul, late thirties)

This local debate concerning appropriate methods to bring about community healing has been intensified by another factor: during the past two years, a significant percentage of the Innu counsellors working in Sheshatshit have attended programmes sponsored by the Nechi Institute of Alcohol and Drug Education⁵⁶ in Edmonton, Alberta and incorporated much of what they have learned into their counselling work. The Nechi Institute is an organization devoted to training Aboriginal people in addiction counselling and healing with a unique approach based on a distinctly "Native" (and pan-Indian) approach to curing addictions and abuse. Accordingly, the Nechi programme centres on symbols and traditions indigenous to some aboriginal groups such as sweetgrass and sweat lodges, but that are foreign to Innu. This approach is helping to fuel the debate about what are proper ways for Innu to approach healing as some community members are adamantly against these techniques:

In order to be strong, you have to do it by yourself, from your heart...to quit drinking you have to use your heart, to realize what the alcohol is doing to you. I do not believe in the treatment programmes - - I know that the community hired a person from Poundmaker's to do a sweatlodge -- sweetgrass, feathers -- all of that stuff they brought from the west, it's not ours. (Patrick, early thirties)

People need to start taking responsibility for *themselves* instead of using services and programmes as crutches. These are our problems, and we are capable of solving them. They won't be solved by Poundmaker's, by Ontario, by St. John's, by Ottawa. (William, late thirties)

What is this sweetgrass thing? Sweatlodges? Dream Catchers? These things are not our way, not the way of my people here in Sheshatshit...it's not like the treatment programme in country, where *our* ancestors spent many thousands of years and not outside where they pick up all sorts of outside things. (Joe, mid-thirties)

⁵⁶Nechi Institute is a joint facility with Poundmaker's Lodge: Nechi is the training centre for Native intervention workers and Poundmaker's is a Native treatment centre.

I don't understand Nechi training methods fully, but it seems that a lot of people who have gone say that you will never be well until you go through Nechi...if this is the mentality that develops from Nechi, I think it's wrong...it is discouraging people from discovering their *own* ways.

(William, late thirties)

However, for other people, Nechi training offers concrete solutions to extremely difficult problems where very few other options currently exist:

Nechi teaches you how to help all kinds of victims of abuse...it teaches you about anger management and about your own personal growth which is the hardest because you are talking about yourself and you can feel the pain you had as a little child (Hannah, late thirties)

I spent two years of training in Nechi...it's good, a real eye-opener and really helped me. You learn to share your pain...You listen to other people's stories and that's where you start to respect each other. (Grace, mid-forties)

We need more training here, more people outside to teach us about healing and more skills to deal with our problems...there is a need for workshops in the community to help people learn and heal. (Hannah, late thirties)

Ultimately, it appears that there is no singular way to enact community healing. It is a move towards repairing the collective, social fabric, but one that can also be highly individualistic; on the other hand, some people find that the problems they are facing are bigger than they can manage by themselves and seek out assistance from either intervention workers or from external treatment programmes. Other people are convinced that the answers come "from inside" and that is where to begin. However, regardless of this variety of approaches, increasingly in the community discourse "how we heal" is becoming a way to define "what makes us Innu". One product of this search for a balanced approach to healing is an innovative programme called mobile treatment. Many of the themes discussed above re-emerged while speaking with some of the people involved in creating and implementing this programme, to which I now turn.

Ashuapun: Waiting for the caribou

When I was in Sheshatshit during the summer of 1995, Healing Services and the Innu Nation had just completed its second mobile treatment session, and the people involved in its planning and implementation were very proud about it. Mobile treatment is an innovative and new kind of treatment programme developed in Sheshatshit and Utshimassit over the past three years by the Innu Nation Health Commission, staffed uniquely by community members from those two Innu communities. Mobile treatment is based on external treatment models such as the Nechi programmes, but has been reworked to fit specific Innu needs in a country setting at a place called *Ashuapun* (or Border Beacon in English⁵⁷), in the interior of Labrador. The site is significant not only because it is located on hunting land between the two Innu communities and not in either one, but also because of its historical importance: *Ashuapun* means "waiting for the caribou" in *Innu-aimun*, and geographically it is a prime spot for harvesting the large herd that migrates through it. Furthermore, being situated in country space, the programme again taps into the mythic strength of Innu while in country that is at the core of Innu identity. The first mobile treatment session was held in October, 1994 and was so successful that a second was started in April, 1995.

The most recent programme lasted for two months: 41 Innu clients (six families), 11 counsellors and their families, 7 support staff, and one cook spent eight weeks together in a large camp, living in tents out in country, and working together in group sessions to address the reasons that brought them there. The camp was also joined on special "Cultural Days" by six Innu elders, three from Sheshatshit and three from Utshimassit. On these days (two days out of five), the six elders held informal sessions talking about Innu knowledge and traditional skills. Unlike the external treatment programmes at Brentwood

⁵⁷Unlike certain Innu words such as *nutshimit*, *Utshimassit*, and *mina* that some people used while speaking English, people consistently called *Ashuapun* by its English name in interviews with me, and I will maintain this usage in my discussion of the treatment programme.

or Poundmaker's Lodge, Border Beacon is a family oriented treatment programme: it is not just the person struggling with addiction or abuse who goes 'for treatment', but the entire family: parents, spouses, and children, in an attempt to address more of the root issues at hand:

After prayer and hugs in the morning, there would be an hour or so long lecture on a variety of topics -- alcoholism, grieving, suicide, family violence, alcoholism as a disease, aftercare. And then the group would split up into three smaller sized groups of women [only], men [only], and kids. During the fourth week, the [individual] families were then put together to work things out. This is a *family* treatment centre -- it is conducted in *Innu-aimun*, using the counsellors' own experiences as examples, experiences that everyone there was familiar with and understood...the people at mobile treatment liked these things about it in comparison with treatment programmes far away where there are no examples and the language is not the maternal one...being close to the land and nature makes a difference, too. Also, it helps build ties with people and counsellors from Davis Inlet and lets you get to know them as people. (Norma, early forties)

Border Beacon was really good...we were sharing (with each other) in our own language, and the people there knew each other. (Joey, mid-twenties)

People have been going to treatment, but in a different culture, language, setting...it just gave them the awareness that they had a problem and then they had to come back (to the community) and deal with it alone, away from the support system at the treatment centre, like Brentwood. But if you have a problem, it's not just *you* -- it's like a ripple in a pond that grows and spreads out to include and affect your spouse, your kids, your relatives, and finally, the whole community. That's why the mobile treatment programme began, and furthermore, why it's a family based programme...It's not easy to open up to your neighbors and to the people you live with when talking about things like abuse and neglect and hurt, but in coming together like this and trying to open up and face each other and address the situation, you are developing a strength and a community foundation because now you can talk to your neighbours, the people you live with, instead of avoiding each other and whatever hurts there have been...

We've received excellent feedback on Border Beacon...it helps people look at their issues in the community and in themselves...they are able to share their feelings and tears in their own voice, from their own heart, in their own language and don't have to think about what they're saying in English, but can just say it...

I really wanted to work with people in country, especially because everyone had always spoken of being in country as healing, healthy, as a crucial part of who we are as Innu, as healthy Innu. So I wanted to work with people in country...the clients for the mobile treatment programme came from a pool of people in both communities familiar to the alcohol and drug counsellors and already in the recovery healing process. The organizers asked people in this group for submissions and then talked to the people that were interested in coming, to evaluate their place in the healing process and to try and admit that at a point that the programme could help the most. The ten counsellors' final assessment was that 45⁵⁸ clients needed to go; they wouldn't take individuals because it is a family treatment programme, with three families coming from each community. (Noah, late twenties)

I think the programme worked, and people liked it there because there was caribou, fish, and partridge... (Hannah, late thirties)

Mobile treatment at Border Beacon exemplifies many of the themes and issues discussed previously in this chapter and this thesis. In the first place, Border Beacon is a community based and initiated programme that focuses on helping people heal by bringing troubled families together in a country setting to talk. Unlike the external treatment programmes both at Brentwood and Poundmaker's, the programme at Border Beacon is conducted wholly in *Innu-aimun*, the maternal language of everyone present at the programme.

Furthermore, Border Beacon combines external practices like lectures and information sessions on topics such as 'alcoholism as a disease', 'grieving', and 'aftercare', with a distinctly Innu setting and Innu 'cultural days'. Thus, although the content of mobile treatment appears to be highly influenced by the training the counsellors have received at the Nechi Institute about addictions counselling, the setting they have chosen to work in is rich with cultural significance for Innu and carries deep symbolic meaning. As described in Chapter Three, country space is marked in community discourse as a distinctively Innu space, as a healing space; a space away from the pressures of community life; a space where people feel relaxed and closer to their families. The community

⁵⁸45 clients attended the first session and 41 the second.

organizers are building on these almost mythical proportions of country for its perceived healing potential and joining it with external techniques.

This reanchoring in country space is itself a potent characteristic of the programme that helps emphasize the family and communal dimensions of mobile treatment; indeed, it is these very dimensions that are increasingly being described in the community discourse as "the Innu way" of approaching community healing. Although a number of people questioned the worth of external treatment programmes and felt that the programmes were not 'Innu', this *syncretic* approach of mobile treatment at Border Beacon was deemed successful and worthwhile by everyone I spoke with. It appears that the issue at stake here is not one of "tradition" in the sense of "how did we heal traditionally", but rather "how do we as *Innu* heal our community?; "what, as *Innu*, do we turn to in order to address what is happening in our community?". For many people, the answer is linked to a vision of country space as a place of strength and of "Innu-ness". Traditions were not being evoked or recreated as much as the strength of country space as a place where Innu are strong was being mobilized to help people regain confidence and change their lifestyles.

In this chapter I have shown the wide variety and scope of programmes geared towards community healing in Sheshatshit, their influence on the different levels of community life, and the internal debates arising from this context. A final issue I would like to address returns to the differences between Healing Services and Social Services.

Social suffering is a violent process, fragmenting interpersonal relations and the community fabric. Previously in Sheshatshit there was a distinct lack of concrete resources and programmes to assist people in their attempts to reorder and heal these injured relations. During the past seven years, some community members have increasingly turned to external sources for help: training programmes such as Nechi (with programmes like "Family Healing Circles", "Sentencing Circles", "Anger Management"), external treatment centres, and Alcoholics Anonymous have begun to fill this void.

Significantly, these external elements once introduced have not remained static: as much as they have influenced local approaches to healing, they have in turn been shaped by the local reality of Sheshatshit. For example, "talking" as a mechanism for healing has been incorporated by both Healing Services workers and Social Services workers but utilized in distinct ways: Healing Services emphasizes talking as a way to reconcile families, while Social Services focuses on talking more as revealing cases of abuse.

Healing Services is mandated to work with social problems on both the individual and communal levels. It is also deeply involved as negotiator on behalf of community members with exterior forces at one point of interface: the criminal justice system. On the other hand, Social Services *represents* one aspect of the same external system and helps implement it within Sheshatshit. Both programmes are involved in community healing, but these constraints appear to have changed the meaning healing takes on in each context. Furthermore, the extent to which external notions of healing (taking "talking" as a therapy again to illustrate this point) have been transformed and reinterpreted correlates with the focus of the different programmes. Social Services, with its approach geared at a more individualistic level (such as the Anger Management programme for inmates that works with people that have been temporarily removed from the community) and following a specific government (external) mandate, leaves external philosophies of treatment largely unmodified. On the other hand Healing Services, mandated by the community and initiated locally (internal), has maximized a reinterpretation of external information towards healing by such programmes as mobile treatment, a syncretic and community based therapy that draws on both Innu knowledge and reshaped external elements.

CHAPTER FIVE

Closing remarks

What does it mean to heal a community? How does a community heal? As I have demonstrated, the answers to these questions and the questions themselves are exceptionally important in Sheshatshit today. In general terms, community healing is about relationships; it is about individuals; it is about restoring balance and mending the social fabric, yet beyond this framework, community members hold a wide variety of opinions about the most salient aspects of healing and the best ways to approach it.

Community healing is a response to collective problems and social suffering. It is equally a process that takes place on the individual level as people seek to re-order interpersonal relationships that have been grievously injured by abuse and alcoholism. On a concrete level, community intervention programmes such as Healing Services and Social Services are (in their distinct ways, and according to their respective mandates) providing people with frameworks in which to implement these changes. The therapeutic value of "talking" as a mechanism towards healing is being encouraged and intervention workers are helping to create space for it within the community. Increasingly, external treatment and training programmes are also being described by some community members as highly therapeutic and helpful. This in turn has sparked debate as to what "Innu ways" are in the face of these social problems and what a distinctly Innu position towards community healing should be. As such, community healing is linked to issues of Innu identity and how it is being asserted and defined.

Social turmoil is aimless and destructive, snowballing into a variety of interrelated problems: alcoholism, family violence, sexual abuse, and neglect circling without beginning and without ending. However, for some community members, the pent up anger and frustration that go along with such situations came eventually to serve them and helped trigger political protest and activism against NATO low-level flight training and restrictive

game laws. These particular issues that sparked Innu political protest were especially significant not only because of their implications for self-determination, but also because they are intimately tied to the assertion of Innu identity. The NATO overflights and the game laws endangered Innu autonomy to live in country and Innu caribou hunting, both central tenets of Innu-ness with strong symbolic significance to Innu. Furthermore, according to community discourse, the strength and pride people rediscovered by participating in these protests was the same strength that then lent itself to healing ("it took a lot of courage to walk on the runway...") and breaking the cycle of social suffering and pain. Part of community healing then loops back to pride and empowerment; being proud of being Innu is an element of community healing on both the individual and communal levels.

Another salient point of connection between community healing and the remobilization of Innu identity is seen in country space. Going in country emerged time after time in community discourse as a central element of being Innu and as a place of strength for Innu people: "The healing for the Innu, I think, is in the country..."; "...everyone had always spoken of being in country as healing, as healthy, as a crucial part of who we are as Innu, as healthy Innu"; "...the medicine and food we need, trees, water, plants, are all in the country and all that we need to heal". Country space takes on almost mythic qualities in terms of its capacity to heal on both the personal and community levels, and offers a safe space in which to disentangle deeply painful issues. Through a nostalgia for the past that remembers life in country in the "old days" as healthier and happier, Innu are rediscovering new strength for the present by evoking the perceived strength of country space to permit a rebuilding of individual and interpersonal relations and reinforce social connections by referring to the past. This is exemplified not only by people's comments about being in country, but also by the highly successful mobile treatment programme at Border Beacon that is utilizing outside treatment therapies within a symbolically charged Innu setting.

Much has been made of the "invention of tradition" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) and "genuine" and "invented" traditions (Hobsbawm 1983). Others have challenged these static concepts of tradition and described tradition as more fluid and as an "on-going interpretation of the past" (Handler and Linnekin 1984:287). This thesis takes both identity and tradition to be fluid and ever changing, but also has avoided trying to qualify "traditions" and "Innu traditions". Instead, I have chosen to describe country space and Innu identity in terms of substantive nostalgia (Strathern 1995) that focuses on how the nostalgia for country and the past has been reshaped in conjunction with present day needs and within the present day context to mean something new while at the same time referring to the remembered past. "Nostalgia" should not be taken to mean something condescending or "invented", but rather as Battaglia emphasizes, as "a vehicle of knowledge, rather than only a yearning for something lost...nostalgia for a sense of future" (1995:77-8). Indeed, the reshaping and remobilizing of country space within the context of community healing is a strongly positive and forward looking movement, reaching towards creating a better future for Sheshatshit.

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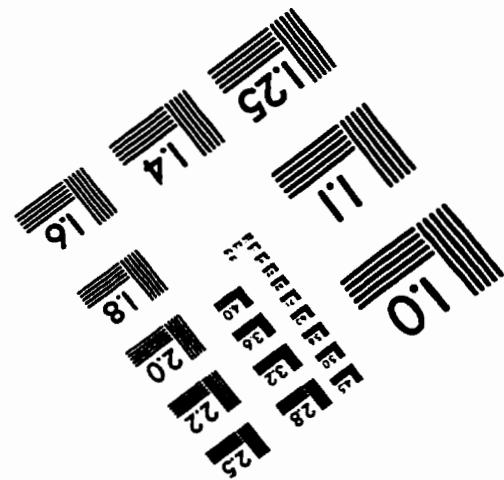
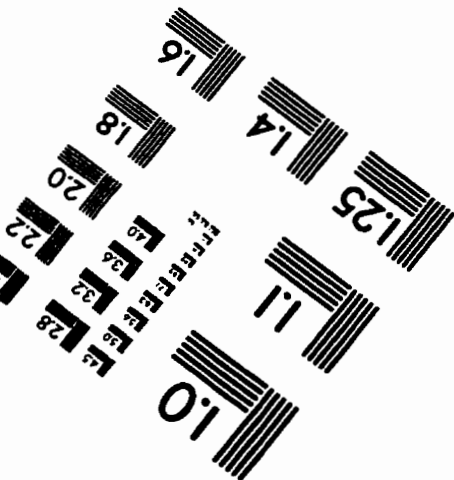
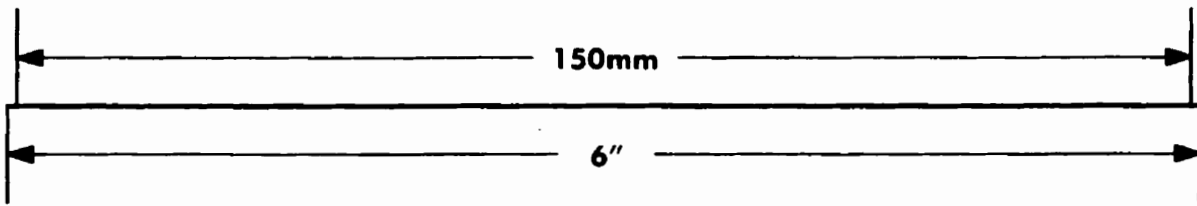
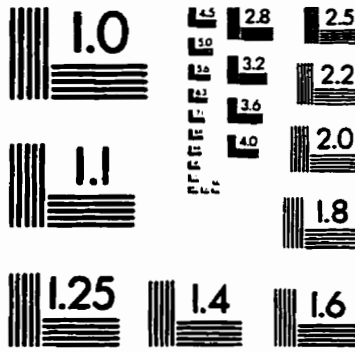
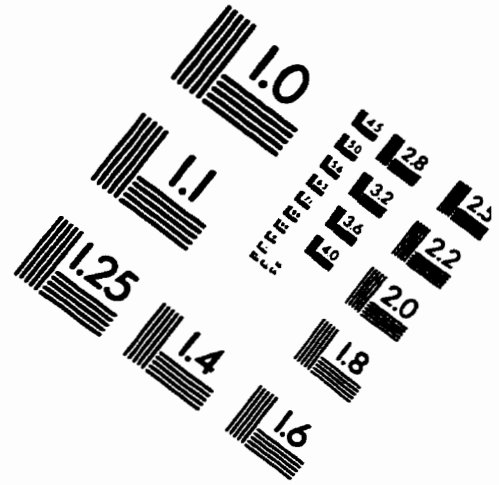
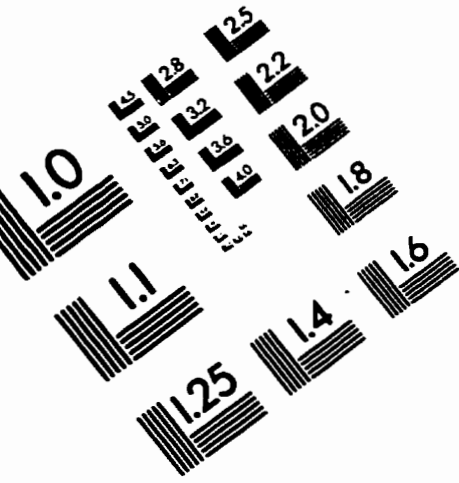
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