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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I want to extend a thank you to the Ancestors, and the keepers of the land that we are visitors upon, of the West Kootenays where the project was implemented. I also want to thank the Coast Salish and the Metis communities that live at the coast for the opportunity to study at the University of Victoria.

In keeping with Aboriginal practice, I will begin by introducing and locating the Who, What, Where and Why of myself, the research participants, the culture and this project as a show of respect to the reader. This introduction also serves as a summary of this report.

The researcher:

I am a Metis woman born in Winnipeg, Manitoba but have lived in several other places such as Montreal, Calgary, and various towns in British Columbia often moving for economic reasons, not unlike my ancestors during the time of buffalo hunting and the days of the Fur Trade Voyageur. Born in the mid- 20th century, I was raised to know I was of the Metis culture, but gently informed by my parents, I should not publicize this truth; somehow if my culture remained a secret, it would lead to a better personal outcome. I had also been raised to respect my Elders, and so I listened. It was an odd circumstance to be internally proud of your ancestry, and at the same time, be externally ashamed.

My parents, having had little opportunity for formal education, instilled in me a desire and love of learning that has not abated through the years. My parents were so proud of my high school graduation. However, due to life choices, I was 30 before I graduated with my undergraduate degree in Social Work, and it was my mother, alone by that time, who uttered "I am so proud of you." Now in my mid 50's, with my Master's degree in Community Development just moments away, I will feel both my parents' presence and pride from a place that I have not yet traveled.

With the guidance of Creator/God, this love of learning and my cultural pride that I can finally express openly, has lead me on an incredible journey. I have a passion to help my cultural community move forward into the future with healthy patterns of interaction both within and outside the culture.

The research participants:

The participants would be better described as researcher-participants. The twenty (20) original women had been hand-picked by our Elders, during the conception phase of the project. Over the course of about three (3) years, some women left the working group, and others were added culminating in the participation of sixteen (16) women at the implementation phase of the project held in March, 2013 in Nelson, BC. These women represented three (3) regions in BC- the Kootenays, the Thompson/Okanagan and the Northeast. They all self-identified as Metis, with or without possession of a Metis Nation

British Columbia (MNBC) identity card. Communication through the conception, gestation and delivery of the project was done primarily using technology such as the computer and telephone with much fewer face to face gatherings.

The Metis culture:

Described in more detail in chapters 2- Introduction, 3- Background and 4-Literature Review, the Metis culture was born of the mixing of two distinct cultures, the European colonists, and the colonized First Nations. This dichotomous blend has been plagued with issues, but we also possess assets and discovering those assets is the focus of this research project. We wanted to reframe our culture; bring forward its benefits for we know all too well its problems and we have spent far too much time obsessed with these problems over the years. The time has come to re-invent ourselves. Our cultural attributes include innovation, creativity and “being our own boss” (Harrison, 1985, p. 12), providing us many skills to move forward.

The BC Metis Women Healing and Community Development Project:

The conception of the project started before my university acceptance, therefore this project is the definition of Community Based Participatory Research. It is a research project created and realized for and by the people themselves. We developed the details of the project by collaboration; combining the wealth of experience, knowledge, skills and abilities from the participant-researchers involved.

Without planning such, this project has exemplified Aboriginal theory, research methodologies and tools and through its process, has enabled us to gain a better sense of who we are as an Aboriginal group. We have begun to answer the question posed by one of our Elders “How do we want to place the Metis on the map?” (Personal conversation, Elder Claudia Mitchell, June 2011). The Master’s question is an elaborate version of our Elder’s simple, succinct, yet complex question.

Executive Summary continued:

Throughout the report, the word Aboriginal is interchanged with the word Indigenous. As the research-participants travelled through the project process, we realized that Indigenous is a more inclusive name, and as the Metis, we are sensitive to exclusion, having spent most of our history on the periphery of both our European and First Nations communities. The term Aboriginal is used when it is cited by an author, or seems to be more relevant to the sentence. The reader can decide for themselves if the words are interchangeable.

Travelling through the chapters of this report we note a twofold purpose: it will serve as a summary for the participant-researchers and as the educational requirements for the researcher. Hopefully for reader convenience, when the term researcher is used alone, it refers to myself, as researcher of this Master’s project. When the word participant is used

alone, it refers to all the other researcher-participants in an attempt to delineate the community based purpose from the educational purpose of this project.

The journey through this report will also provide 1) details to the above introductions, 2) will lead the reader to discover our discoveries of the importance of our Elders teachings that state in order to know where you are going, you must know where you come from, 3) the importance of remembering and engaging in our traditions, 4) and the importance of the Teachings and Power of Circle.

INTRODUCTION

Title of project: BC Metis Women Healing and Community Development Project

Client: BC Metis Women's Ad Hoc Working Group

Supervisor: Dr. Budd Hall, UVic supervisor. Ms. Donna Wright, Metis mentor and Elder for Strengthening Metis Women Development Association (SMWDA)

Problem overview:

The researcher experienced conflict in her own Metis community, both as recipient and perpetrator of lateral violence, resulting in a period of deep self-reflection that led to many discussions with community members and the eventual pursuance of the Masters of Arts in Community Development through the University of Victoria. This program led to several other enriching educational opportunities which have culminated into an understanding of the systemic basis for the pain that exists within Aboriginal communities and in the case of this research project, more specifically the pain that exists for the Metis. The expressed behaviours of this pain is called lateral violence.

Lateral violence is described as internalized oppression. This lateral violence/oppression results in bullying behaviours directed to one another- laterally-in a learned cycle of abuse (Native Women's Association of Canada, n.d.). These behaviours are not exclusive to Aboriginal communities, however, for the purpose of this research paper the exploration and discussion is directed to the Metis culture in understanding why and how our culture developed its current state.

From personal experience of this researcher when working within her cultural community, these lateral violence behaviours have been seen to create a difficult working environment. When the Metis are in opposition to one another, seemingly, few conflict resolution skills are witnessed, even though some of us possess higher education and have proven conflict resolution abilities and capabilities in other settings. This observation certainly begged for an understanding and perhaps a solution.

So what is the problem? Is it in the understanding, or as this project proposes, the misunderstanding of the root source of these behaviours? Lateral violence is a learned behaviour pattern as a result of colonialism, patriarchy, discrimination, and racism (Native Women's Association of Canada, n.d.); it is not simply an individual personality conflict as described and understood by many Metis. When a people's traditions and spiritual understandings are forcibly altered or repressed by another group, trauma occurs, and results in dysfunctional social skills that are especially exhibited between one another within that oppressed group. The oppressed become the oppressor (Native Women's Association of Canada, n.d.).

However, it is not an easy concept for people to accept. There are still many Metis that believe the exhibited bullying behaviors are individually driven; they are due to personality conflicts between individuals. Notwithstanding, individual conflicts do exist, but a systemic understanding of the conflict plays the major part in the healing story. Our project findings propose the Metis must begin the healing process by making the connection between our history and our current situation. To continue blaming one another for the conflicts will keep us trapped in an unending cycle of lateral violence. In fact the act of blaming is simply part of this cycle; transformation will only occur as we open ourselves to learning and understanding.

Client’s rationale for the project:

It became clear to the Kootenay Metis that it would be necessary to work more systematically to ensure success and survival of Metis related programs. Funding dollars were scarcer and the head office at Metis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) was verbally encouraging independence and innovation within the regions as they recognized they could not provide for all the Metis needs within British Columbia. Through discussing our needs it soon became clear that it would be the Metis women who would spearhead any community based project. Headed by Ms. Donna Wright, the Chair of the Metis Women of British Columbia (MWBC) at the time, the women began discussing community development concepts in combination with our need for healing. We realized our inability to progress as a culture was not due to a lack of energy or good ideas that stood as barriers; rather it was related to a pain, an ancestral pain that results in behaviours of lateral violence. We recognized we must heal in order to move forward. In an article of Aboriginal community models by Peter Elias (1997) he describes the cultural model. It suggests that political, social and economic development is linked and should occur simultaneously by peoples who will also achieve strength and health through their traditional history and knowledge (p.1250). It is through a grassroots organic process that the BC Metis Women Healing and Community Development project was conceived. Donna Wright was instrumental in connecting several Metis women through engaging us in gatherings and discussions on how to move our Nation ahead in a positive, healthy manner. Through this project we express the ancient Aboriginal principle “When the women heal, the family heals. When the family heals, the Nations heal” (Kenny, C., Faries, E., Fiske, J., Voyageur, C., 2004, p. 1)

Objectives and research question:

Research question: “How will the BC Metis Women better define and heal themselves, their families and their Nation while examining their history, exploring the current assets and opportunities to develop a strategic plan for their future?”

Objectives:

1) The client wishes to use a community based participatory research (CBPR) process to develop strong community connections and to develop a Metis women’s community development model which may be transferable to other regions.

2) The client wants to make use of a “Train the Trainer” approach to enable reaching the maximum number of community members as possible. As the core group of women participants in the pilot project are trained, they can then implement further gatherings in their respective communities.

3) The client will incorporate traditional healing techniques to help mitigate the effects of the lateral violence behaviours long experienced by the Metis, which have previously acted as a barrier to developing strong, decisive community based strategic planning. These healing techniques are derived from our two parent cultures: the First Nations drum ceremony and the Metis dance and music which links to our European ancestors.

4) The CBPR project will include the use of an asset based community development tool (ABCD) which leads the community in a mapping exercise to list the positive aspects and resources of the Metis Nation from which opportunities are identified then used in strategic planning sessions.

List of the key deliverables:

-This project is an example of Community Based Participatory Research (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993) as the idea for this project was conceived, developed and implemented by a collaborative process of the Metis women’s community.

-The CBPR process was linked to the healing of ancestral pain utilizing traditional healing techniques from both our First Nations and European ancestors. In the drum making ceremony each woman made a drum and learned songs. The songs offered healing and strengthening of our circle and connected us to our First Nations ancestors. The Metis style music and dance aided in the learning/re-learning of this time-honored healing method (see chapter 4- Literature Review). Both healing techniques involved active physical participation along with much verbal and non-verbal communication through which a sense of community was developed. The CBPR process offered the space for community building. Together we ate, danced, drummed, sang, laughed, cried, talked, teased, and supported one another.

- In the evaluation and data gathering process each woman was asked to share her thoughts and feelings on what the drum ceremony, the Metis dance and music, the lateral violence video and the ABCD components meant to her with the offered information recorded by the researcher. This information has been transferred to a computer file to be disseminated among the women participants as per their request. Although the concept of ancestral pain is not particular to the Metis, for colonized, disenfranchised peoples this pain seems to be magnified. The Metis are a culture derived of two, and marginalized by both our parent cultures. We experienced the same pain as any unwanted, rejected child, and have struggled for recognition and acceptance ever since. This manifestation often results in behaviours of self-abuse, and lateral violence behaviours between Metis individuals/groups. Therefore the drum making and song learning ceremony is an integral part of the design along with the Metis dance style born of the European music and dance form. It has been the Metis music and dance that has

kept the spirit of the Metis alive throughout the darkest days of its history (see chapter 4- Literature Review) and is a healing technique in its own right; therefore celebration/ceremony of the drum and Metis dance healing techniques were woven throughout the workshop. In several research studies conducted by Bittman, B.B., et al (2001) findings showed statistically significant increases in immune system cell activity along with elevated mood by participants in drumming/music sessions. It is from this basic premise we have based our research project: can musically- based traditional healing techniques aid in the process of community development?

-Lateral Violence knowledge was gained through the viewing and discussion of the DVD video titled: Lateral Violence (BearPaw Media Productions, 2006). The concept name and root cause was contemporary information for many in the group, but the experience of lateral violence was well known by most participants.

-The Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) tool developed by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) was incorporated to generate positive based data. Each member of the women's working group was offered an explanation of the ABCD tool, which directs participants to list the assets of their community to establish a strong and positive foundation from which to determine opportunities. The ABCD tool was divided into four categories to more easily follow the four directions of the medicine wheel. The component of human resources had us share and describe what we saw in others of the group by using a guide that categorizes gifts and talents from our hands, hearts or heads (Asset Based Community Development Institute, appendix 2, p 137). This component furthered the process of group bonding and addressed the fact that we really know very little about one another. In previous encounters we only concentrated on the work at hand to further the Metis Nation, but had not taken the time to share our stories, to learn more about one another or to voice our values. The other components of ABCD consist of identifying our associations/institutions and their services; the physical and natural resources with an exploration of ownership patterns and finally discussion on our local and global economy. These aspects were looked at from the viewpoint of the Metis society both past and present.

-Collective analysis and dissemination: Once the maps were created, the group was guided through the analyses. They were asked to collate, make connections and links and determine any opportunities for the Metis community, explaining that eventually the "lowest hanging fruit" (Coady International Institute, 2012, p. 55) would become the starting point of a strategic planning process. They were asked to share their dream for the Metis, verbalize and document the values held and encouraged to develop formal vision and mission statements. As expected, further work beyond the pilot project is necessary to move to the stage of strategic and/or economic development for the BC Metis women.

-Each woman was given the gifts of a manual on the ABCD process, an instructional Metis dance CD and a drum to take back and share with her home community. Upon group

request the collected data of the project was given to the researcher to transfer to a computer file to be disseminated among the participants.

-Timetable: The women's working group engaged in a collaborative process of completing grant applications to fund the implementation of the project by using a communication system of email, phone and the occasional face to face meetings. Some resistance was met early in the design phase. We have not been able to convince all the BC Metis women leaders on the validity of this project, however, there was enough interest by some that warranted continuing with the process. The pilot project was held March 9, 10 and 11, 2013 in Nelson, BC approximately three (3) years from conception.

-We designed a two and one half (2.5) day gathering. Day one saw the drum making and song learning ceremony, the re-learning of our Metis dance steps and discussions of the concept of ancestral pain and the resulting lateral violence behaviours. Day two and three (half-day) we worked through the ABCD process, mapped our community, decided on our opportunities and prepared for next step of strategic planning. Dancing and drumming were weaved throughout the entire gathering.

Brief discussion of the client:

The original client was to be the Kootenay region, but after several discussions, it was specifically the Metis women that decided to move forward with action. An ad hoc Metis women's working group was formed and was responsible for the design of the project. This was not a smooth process; some of our original ad hoc members did not participate and some left. Although the Metis Women of British Columbia (MWBC) were also invited to be members of the ad hoc group, only three regions supported the project.

We experienced a startling Metis Nation BC (MNBC) election result which translated into even less support for our group, including a lack of financial support from MNBC. We also faced a blockage in finding the second half of the needed project funding. At the beginning, we decided to support our MNBC chartered communities and had received permission from a local Kootenay Metis society to act as our lead organization. Through our journey though, we learned that development activities, such as those included in our project goals, have a different focus from political goals. So, a group of five (5) women from the ad hoc committee decided to create the Strengthening Metis Women Development Association (SMWDA). It is interesting to note, that soon after the organization's society number arrived, a confirming response was received from our second funder.

Brant Castellano (2000) has described that Aboriginal learning and thinking is different. We learn through: hearing and sharing our stories, through empirical observations rather than experiments separated from the whole and through revelations. After struggling for so long to find our leverage funding partner and to have the funding appear soon after we made a commitment to healthy Metis communities through participatory development with the creation of SMWDA, we recognized this revelatory event as acknowledgement

that we were now on the correct path. This was further confirmed through a research document by Lane, Bopp, Bopp and Norris (2002) in which one of the recommendations for Aboriginal communities is to form not-for-profit development organizations that are separate from the Aboriginal political systems.

Description of the organization of the report:

This report follows the organization suggested in the University of Victoria, School of Public Administration Guide for the Preparation of Master's Projects (2011). Chapter 1 provides the Executive Summary of the report and also serves as a traditional Aboriginal introduction to situate the reader.

In chapter 2, the reader will be introduced to the Who, How, When, Where and Why of the research project.

In chapter 3 the reader is led through more detailed background information, and a brief history of the project.

Chapter 4 provides a literature review in line with traditional Aboriginal storytelling that will aid the reader in understanding the importance of the BC Metis Women Healing and Community Development Project. The researcher is aware this method strays from the traditional linear University literature review process where a problem is identified, former research work is examined, and then a research project is designed to either prove or refute the findings of the former work. Our research project is very organic, and circular in its orientation.

A diagram of this circular, organic research orientation is offered in chapter 5 on Methodology. This is not to say that Aboriginal peoples do not look at history, or do not perform experiments, or come to conclusions, rather the difference in "how we find things out" (Wilson, 2008), lies in the process.

Chapter 6 reports our findings and what we learned.

Chapter 7 leads the reader through a journey of our findings discussion. As Aboriginal people, we were not searching for an absolute truth, instead we explore what is our truth with those gathered at that moment. We are well aware that even as we upscale the project, our project will not produce exactly the same results; there are far too many variables that we will not be able to control. The goal is to deliver the project components- our history, an introduction to ancestral pain and its resulting lateral violence behaviours, traditional healing techniques and the asset based community development tool and make space for each community to develop its own learning and understanding.

In chapter 8, the recommendation from the participants is to up-scale the project for delivery throughout the communities of the three (3) represented regions. The first draft details of the project up-scaling are listed.

Chapter 9- It is presumptuous to offer conclusions from an Aboriginal philosophical viewpoint, so rather, a concluding section has been provided. It combines the preceding chapters' findings with the research work by Fyre Jean Graveline (1998). We explain the overall finding of this project was the Power of Circle. Although Graveline's work was based from the field of education, we make the connection between her work and ours.

BACKGROUND

Ancient History

I will offer a background summary to set the stage of the BC Metis Women Healing and Community Development project. The Metis culture was born of the mixing of North American First Nations and European immigrants, and over time people of mixed blood married and reproduced forming the Metis identity. Mainstream society history books record the Metis in turbulent struggles with the Canadian government for Aboriginal rights; indeed modern day Metis are still engaged in this struggle as witnessed by the more recent Daniels ruling (Federal Court, 2013).

Tales of the past tend to focus on conflicts such as the Riel Rebellions (Wikipedia, n.d., Riel Rebellion) with subsequent actions by the Metis to “lay below the radar” and the lesser acknowledged connection to the effects of the Canadian Gradual Civilization Act of 1857 (Wikipedia, n.d., Gradual Civilization Act) with its enfranchisement efforts to annihilate Aboriginal entitlement. However, more recently, history books written by our people are researching our full story; a story told by our perspective. Our early history (prior to the 1800’s) informs us of the honorable role we played in Canadian history. The mixing of cultures created a Nation of people known as “the children of the fur trade” (Harrison, 1985, p. 18) who possessed valuable assets such as proper protocol knowledge, and the ability to speak the languages of several Native and European groups. Along with indigenous knowledge and survival skills of the land, the Metis were invaluable to the fur trade. As time went on, the Metis diversified their livelihoods to include farming and trapping. (Harrison, 1985). It is important to note the most consistent trait of the Metis is captured in a Cree word “*o-tee-paym-soo-wuk*- which means ‘their own boss’. Never a group to be herded, channeled or manipulated, the Metis have constantly reaffirmed their independence” (Harrison, 1985, p. 12). I believe this trait, along with our rich history of pride and prejudice was instrumental in the development of the BC Metis Women Healing and Community Development project.

Recent history

How has our history led to our project? I will now lead you to examine our more recent story. Although some provinces have made greater head way than others in the realm of Metis rights, at this point, British Columbia is lagging behind somewhat. Having said this, Metis Nation British Columbia (MNBC), the head political organization for the BC Metis, has delivered self-government rights in its short sixteen (16) year history and this work must continue to ensure the Metis in this province are able to provide the services and programs they determine.

Even though MNBC has a vision and mission statement and a set of bylaws that each chartered community can adopt or revamp, what was uncovered through dialogue among some members is the dichotomy that exists between the vision statement with a political focus and the mission statement dedicated to development. The following is taken from the MNBC website (Metis Nation British Columbia, n.d.):

Vision

Metis Nation British Columbia will build a proud, self-governing, sustainable Nation in recognition of Inherent Rights for our Metis citizens.

Mandate

Metis Nation British Columbia develops and enhances opportunities for our Metis chartered communities by implementing culturally relevant social and economic programs and services.

Dichotomy factor

This dichotomy is one factor that has seen our head organization struggle in an attempt to “be all things to all people” which it has not been able to successfully accomplish. One of the reoccurring themes of the ad hoc women’s committee was a desire to do something in their communities as there was currently not much being offered (multiple participants, personal communications, BC Metis Women Healing and Community Development project, March 8,9,10, 2013). If one examines each community, or more simply, examines the MNBC website, it becomes clear that some communities provide services that are funded through MNBC (Metis Nation British Columbia, 2013, Ministries and other services) with many more communities not able to provide services unless they seek funding individually through other sources. There is a sense among the Metis that there are “have” and “have-not” communities and regions. There is probably a population based rationale for some of these decisions, but there is also a sense among the “have-nots” that the decisions made by MNBC are derived from a prejudiced basis.

Regional and Community Level factor

Our project started within the Kootenay region, as we consider ourselves on the “have-not” list of Metis communities. There are reasons for this condition. Firstly the six MNBC chartered communities in the Kootenay region have not taken the time to voice their values, determine their own mission and vision statements, or develop a strategic plan. Programming to date is very piecemeal and leads to frustration of the members as a focus does not exist and regional and provincial inequities do exist. Secondly, although we cannot verify preferential regional behavior, we can verify the financial status of MNBC as this information is publically accessible, however, it was not available on the website. MNBC does not have the capacity to “be all things to all regions” and the misunderstanding of this limit leads to further frustration at the community level. In fact, our communities have been told by MNBC (Keith Henry, personal communication, 2006)

our chartered communities are free agents in the sense we can determine our own needs and opportunities for the future and pursue those dreams and plans.

The overall current tone of the Metis in British Columbia is still one of dissatisfaction, disappointment and mistrust due not only to the above factors, but also to some past political indiscretions on the part of some board members of MNBC and the fear of the outcomes in regards to the growth of a new political Metis organization. This new political faction has risen from the disturbance, but instead of simply wanting to campaign as a strong and real voting alternative to the existing regime, they have formed a second entity. They have sought financial recognition of the Province, however this request, to date, has been met with a negative resolution. The actions of the second faction have served to further divide the Metis Nation.

Lateral Violence factor

Another factor related to the struggle of MNBC, and of the Metis Nation in general, is held in the concept of lateral violence. Approximately three (3) years ago, some of the Kootenay Metis women began earnest discussions about our community and regional condition, our lack of services and programs, the lack of support we felt from MNBC, and we began to question why, when we gathered to work together, our efforts almost always ended in such discord. We gingerly talked about how we seemed so easily slighted by one another and how our personalities seemed to change when we held positions of power. Although we recognized inequities at the individual, community, regional and provincial levels we wondered why this translated into such jealousies instead of it becoming an achievement motivator. Some of us started talking about the pain we experienced in our culture; a culture whose history is different from our First Nations cousins, but an Aboriginal culture nonetheless. We were also affected by Canadian policies and laws aimed at annihilating Aboriginal title, and beyond this, we are a culture that was ultimately rejected by both our parent cultures. We are Canada's forgotten people (Harrison, 1985).

To connect this pain to the concept of lateral violence was revelatory. We had witnessed behaviors such as in-fighting, name calling, sarcasm, blaming, belittling, whining, gossiping, exclusion of some people, sabotage, withholding of information, backstabbing, colluding with the purpose of ganging up on one another (Native Women's Association of Canada, p. 2) and now we had a name for what we could see. Beyond this, we began a journey of discovery of our own history as we took steps to understand the systemic basis and root cause of lateral violence. Lateral violence is described "When a powerful oppressor has directed oppression against a group for a period of time, members of the oppressed group feel powerless to fight back and they eventually turn their anger against each other— Jane Middleton-Moz" (Native Women's Association of Canada, p 1).

What next?

The time has come to take control of our future. The Metis National Council (MNC) comprised of the provincial Metis organizations has declared that 2011- 2020 will be the Decade of the Metis. The MNC has in fact been working for over 20 years to help elevate the profile and opportunities of the Metis. Many programs and services have been designed primarily east of British Columbia such as capital corporations and specific Metis scholarships and bursary trusts. Having said this, MNBC has accredited school programs which Metis students can apply for funding through the federal education program- Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, n.d.). This is a good beginning, but the Metis have a very long way to go in this province to achieve an equitable standing among Canada's Metis, let alone equity in mainstream society.

Strengthening Metis Women Development Association (SMWDA)

Closer to home, at the grassroots level, discussions about our community challenges included men as well as women, but it soon became clear it would be the women who would go beyond the talking phase into planning for action. To answer why it is the women who chose to move ahead is beyond the scope of this research project, albeit it would be an interesting question to explore. Having said this though, we do realize we exhibited an ancient Aboriginal philosophy "When the women heal, the family heals. When the family heals, the Nations heal" (as cited in Kenny, C., Faries, E., Fiske, J., Voyageur, C., 2004).

Our little core group of Kootenay Metis women rose to include members of two other regions. Overall we usually had twenty (20) women at any given time working through the project process of conception, gestation to the final birthing held on March 8, 9, 10, 2013. Sixteen (16) women engaged in a two and one half (2.5) day intensive labor resulting in an amazing delivery which is covered at length in chapter six (6) on Findings.

Through the course of the three (3) year gestation, we thrived through many trials and gained several successes. Although we wanted for all "learn to play nicely in the sandbox", it was only the women willing to take on an action plan. We had to work very hard at collaboration, especially in the beginning when we were at the initial stage of accepting the idea of the existence of ancestral pain, nevertheless we came to an agreement:

- Combine healing techniques with community development tools.

- To honor our two parent cultures, seemingly an unlikely necessity, but the Metis reality is that we tried to hide our Aboriginal ancestry not only from others, but more harmfully from ourselves. As an example, some claim the "Metis don't drum", but we came to realize that our shame and our tendency to hide are

learned behaviors from the darkest days of our history. We no longer need to be held hostage by this history; we can now embrace all that we are.

-We agreed to have this project be part of a university Master's research project.

-We asked for MNBC's support which was sent in written format giving permission to engage in this research, however, financial support was never received.

-We received support from the initial MNBC chartered community we approached- Metis Nation Columbia River Society (MNCRS) to house the funding we would need to access to implement the BC Metis Women Healing and Community Development project.

-Upon a suggestion from MNBC, in relation to the funding needs of the project, we were instructed to contact the now defunct National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO). Although we did receive some good feedback we also experienced some lateral violence.

-Upon the advice of NAHO, we made contact with UVic to clarify any potential conflict of interests.

-Many funding contacts were made and applications sent; many rejections were met: Enterprising Not for Profit, NAHO, MNBC, Status of Women Canada, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), Heritage Canada, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC), Catherine Donnelly Foundation, Philanthropist of Canada, Ashoka and BC Hydro. Columbia Basin Trust (CBT) and VanCity Credit Union were the only two organizations who would agree to fund this innovative, but untried and un-validated pilot project.

-Our greatest revelation was revealed when we decided to move ahead with forming our dream of a Metis women's development organization. We had already confirmed half the required funding with CBT, but our attempts to find a leverage partner were thwarted until we received the society number for SMWDA. It was not even a week later, that VanCity contacted us with their funding affirmation. We came to the conclusion were being held from the full funding until we separated from MNBC. Through this experience, we learned the value in separating politics from development as recommended in a research paper by Lane, Bopp, Bopp and Norris (2002). The other two (2) recommendations most poignant for us from this research were that Aboriginal groups should: 1) create a comprehensive community healing and development plan, and 2) form development organizations.

SMWDA was incorporated November 20, 2012 and is comprised of five (5) board members and two (2) Counselling Elders representing the Northeast,

Thompson/Okanagan and East and West Kootenays. Each one of us carries the title of Director, as we are dedicated to equity in the sharing of work, responsibility and credit. Our vision is of strong and mutually supportive Metis women working together for the betterment of all Metis communities. Our mission is to build strong, healthy more empowered communities by providing seminars on healing and community development and to provide education to increase the public's appreciation of the Metis culture. However since the incorporation, the Daniel's ruling and the affirmations we gained from our project, we have come to realize we will need to revamp these statements. We now feel stronger in our Aboriginal image, and true to our beginnings, we still see our role as a bridge between our First Nations and European ancestry. We intend to be more inclusive rather than limit our work to only Metis communities.

Even for all of SMWDA's good intentions and our growing understanding of lateral violence and its cause, we have not avoided an insinuation that SMWDA has "taken money from MNBC" in sourcing the funding for our project. Through such a statement, we know we have much work to do in our Nation. The damage did not occur overnight; nor will the healing process but this does not deterred us to follow our dreams and goals for our future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overall, there is very little Metis specific research and this researcher was not able to find any within the community based participatory research field, let alone find any previous research that combines healing with community development techniques. We were often told how unique our project is; a new, untried and un-validated project. Also affecting the literature review search is that many research projects tend to use the generic term “Aboriginal” even though the project may have been quite specific to one group. Having said all this, it is not to suggest that the research found does not provide some validity. The research that we chose provides relevance and supports the development and findings of our project. Also, to further explain our approach to this section, in his book, *Research is Ceremony*, Shawn Wilson (2008) states that critiquing someone else’s work does not align itself with the Aboriginal relational accountability philosophy, therefore he suggests in Indigenous research we instead offer a review of the literature (p. 43) rather than an analysis

Perhaps because, pre-European contact, Indigenous people in the Americas lived tribally, where survival was dependent on maintaining a strong sense of community, there is a common philosophical thread that *all is related* (Cajete, 2000). He goes on to say, “Relationship is the cornerstone of tribal community, and the nature and expression of community is the foundation of tribal identity” (p. 86). Even though many Metis tried to forget our cultural identity, this philosophy has somehow remained intact, perhaps as a survival method. In chapter 7- Discussion- we speak to how our Elders led us in, and the importance of, relational ceremony. Margaret Kovach (2009) explains that Indigenous research is about recounting a story, a relational story. In the executive summary, I introduce myself and our group so that the reader can position us in time and space. Our project has a story as well (some of which is covered in chapter 3- Background) and it is this story that will aid the reader to understand the project and the people’s relationship.

Let us start with the Metis Creation Story. We have the European explorer setting foot on Turtle Island (Americas) and meeting the lovely First Nations woman and as is jokingly said among the Metis, nine months later our first ancestor is born. Over time these mixed blood people married and reproduced forming the Metis culture. In a quote from Maria Campbell who is a Metis author, playwright, broadcaster, filmmaker and Elder (Wikipedia, n.d., Maria Campbell), she so fittingly offers a physical description of the mixing of the two parent cultures and provides an excellent symbolic metaphor that carries into all aspects of life and living for the Metis: “Our brown skin, curly hair, and light eyes set us apart from the two people who mothered and fathered our nation” (National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2008). What has this meant for the Metis?

It has meant combining the best of each culture for practical innovation as in the invention of the York Boat which was fashioned using the Orkney Island/Viking boat design. These boats were used during the Fur Trade for traveling the larger bodies of water while holding a greater amount of cargo than could the canoe. (Barkwell, 2012, pg.

52). Another practical invention was the Red River Cart, fashioned from a French design and was used to move trade goods, personal products from the hunt and for transporting people. It was a very versatile design as the large wheels enabled the cart to continue moving through the prairie Gumbo-the affectionate name given the clay based mud found in Manitoba. By removing the wheels, it also served as a barge. In the winter, it was transformed into a cutter. (Barkwell, 2012, pp. 34-35).

It meant making a living by supplying goods to the industries of the day: pemmican and hides for the fur trade, we became the first “cowboys” of the West incorporating ranching and agriculture, along with fishing, hunting and gathering practices. Even the buffalo bones left on the Prairies after the 1800’s slaughter were gathered and made into trade goods such as buttons and a product used in sugar refining. The Metis logged, owned sawmills, were sugar, salt, vinegar and lime makers, Seneca root and berry pickers. (Barkwell, Dorion & Hourie, 2006, p. 214).

We also have a long proud military history. An early recorded group of Metis militia called the Victoria Voltigeurs was hand-picked by Governor James Douglas in 1851 to protect the territory of the West Coast, in what is now Canada, from the Americans (The Virtual Museum of Metis History and Culture, n.d.).

The mixing of two cultures also translates in the symbolic aspects of life as is seen in the bead work. Metis girls were taught embroidery at mission schools and as they were not bound by any particular tradition, they adopted the Catholic floral art decoration into their bead and embroidery work and the Metis became known as the Flower Bead People. (Barkwell et al, 2006, p. 75).

It is seen in our dance and heard in our music: once again, innovation is found in the transformation of the music and dance style of our European and First Nations ancestry as we made it uniquely our own. Through the darkest days, even when we were in hiding, the music and dance was passed down through the generations. It represents the spirit of the Metis which is certainly embedded in the Red River Jig (Barkwell et al, 2006, p. 162). Louis Riel, a political and spiritual leader of the Metis and one of the founding persons of Manitoba, is quoted to have said “My people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake, it will be the artists who give them their spirit back”. (Manitoba Metis Federation, n.d.). This is indeed happening today, as communities embrace and share our art forms and the power of learning and re-learning our dance is seen in chapter 7- Discussion.

It is seen in our clothing: Metis clothing was well known for its elaborate decoration. (Barkwell et al, 2006, p. 72). Today the Metis will wear samples of colorful bead work, the capote and the sash as symbols of our history and are often worn at special celebrations and gatherings.

It is heard in our languages: In the book, *Metis Legacy 2*, an analysis of the structure of Metis stories was conducted and the findings concluded that the Metis uniquely combined the story aspects of First Nations and European ancestry; this mixing is also seen in the structure of the Michif languages. Michif is the general name given to several dialects spoken by the Metis, although the most commonly used was a French/Cree mixture. Unfortunately some of these languages are now defunct and the challenge today is in keeping the remaining Michif languages alive. (Barkwell et al, 2006. p. 174).

It is felt in our spiritual expressions: The religious beliefs of the Metis people are a combination of two worlds as well. It was common for the Metis to combine elements of Native (mostly Ojibwa and Cree), and Christian religions, with many Metis attending church on a regular basis. (Canada's First People, n.d.). Our project encompassed spiritual rather than religious expression as we travelled through the components of lateral violence knowledge, drum making, dancing and community development (see chapter 7-Discussion).

Continuing with what this has meant for the Metis, we also experienced rebellions. With the formation of Canada in 1867, the world was changing and the Metis found themselves fighting for their rights. The Riel Rebellions of 1869 and 1885, although had its amazing victories such as the Battle of Fish Creek where 200 Metis overcame the government force of 900, also had its defeat and led to the subsequent hiding of our culture (Wikipedia, n.d., Riel Rebellion). The struggle for Aboriginal rights started with this newly formed government of Canada who saw western settlement as part of the bigger plan to develop the country. This required extinguishing Aboriginal title which included the Metis but unlike the First Nations groups, the Metis were dealt with on an individual basis through the offer of scrip- a certificate redeemable for land or money which had age and status stipulations. Many of the Metis at the time were illiterate, the parcels of land were handed out on an individual basis and families would have become separated, and often the value was simply not understood. Having said this, the value was well understood by the land speculators who followed behind the government agents offering to purchase the scrip from the Metis for a fraction of the worth (Our Legacy, n.d.).

We have been the Road Allowance People. As a marginalized and landless people, the Metis have lived on the edge of towns, reserves and even the edge of roads as shown in our history (1896 – 1926) when a group of Metis squatted on the government road allowance in Saskatchewan (The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan, n.d.). Although we no longer physically live on the road allowance, it still serves as a symbol of our inequality among both our parent cultures.

We are known as Canada's Forgotten People. An excerpt from a tentative book by Jean Teillet, a Metis lawyer and mentor, eloquently and succinctly describes our story through the narration of an Elder Metis woman. "This morning the nurses here told me that today is April 17, 1982 and the Metis have been recognized in a new Constitution for Canada. I was surprised, but pleased. You know why? ...Because the Metis have been on a long

journey. We were a proud people once. We were the masters of the plains, we were great hunters. We were the translators for the Indian treaties. We lived in between the Indians and the settlers and we helped both sides to understand each other. We were the bridge between two different peoples, but no one cared about us. No one even saw us as a people. They just saw us as a bunch of individuals who would eventually disappear. They thought we would blend either into the white folks or the Indians. We suffered after the buffalo and the defeat of Riel and we sank so low that we became road allowance people. But today, when they put us in a document like that, when they say the Metis are an aboriginal people in Canada. Well maybe in the future that will mean something to my people. I think maybe it means they will eventually see us as who we are. It means we can stop hiding and pretending we are something other than Metis.” (Teillet J., personal communication, April 2012, p. 8).

I must add here, the greatest harm came from the Metis wanting to forget; forget our history, our culture, ourselves. Through these readings I have hoped to provide an understanding of what it means to be Metis, how our history has shaped us, perhaps even offer some insight to our current dreams and actions. I know this research project has helped me understand our story. Our Elders tell us there is a repeated pattern with the Metis. A pattern of passionate, enthusiastic beginnings with ensuing conflict often expressed as jealousy, in-fighting, short-temper over the smallest slight with an apparent inability to deal with this conflict, resulting in the decline of many Metis organizations. Our group has started using the concept of ancestral pain that stems from the rejection of our two parent cultures and from the unique conflicting position of being a people who own both the colonizing and colonized DNA. This has led to the lateral violence behaviors (Bearpaw Media Productions, 2006) we often experience in our communities. The concept of lateral violence has a systemic rather than an individual cause basis, which is not fully accepted by everyone in our culture as yet. However, we are Aboriginal people; we have innately within us, the understanding that all is related. Our story does not stand alone in isolation; it weaves in and out of all the other stories in our Universe. In fact, who better to understand this than the Metis, the offspring of two distinct groups who creatively weaved a rich cultural tapestry?

Hence, our project was born of this story.

It exhibits the innovative Metis traits of combining and bridging. In chapter 7- Discussion- we show how we incorporated the four (4) directional aspects of the medicine wheel: mental, emotional, physical and spiritual to design a project that spoke to us, is relevant and useful to us. It addresses the ancestral pain found in our cultural community that is derived of our own unique colonized history using two commonly used analogies from the Aboriginal community. It also references the work of Marlene Brant Castellano (2000) in which she explains the learning methods used by Indigenous people: 1) through hearing and sharing our stories, 2) through empirical observations rather than experiments separated from the whole and 3) through revelations. There is great healing power for the Metis in being able to re-connect our knowledges back to our Indigenous ancestry.

We have long only allowed acknowledgment of our European traditions, but something was missing. We are learning to once again combine, bridge and embrace the best of what our ancestry has to offer. This is not without its difficulties; the researcher can remember being told she should decide what side of the fence she was on, and instinctively she knew there was something troubling about that statement. Her attempt to balance on the fence was due to the genetic fact that is where she had been positioned; she was neither European, nor First Nations. She was an Indigenous woman of mixed ancestry with a rich, full, engaging history she knew so little of at the time. The story of this researcher is indeed the story of her people as well. Over the last thirty (30) plus years, the Metis have made huge strides in re-awakening and this project is a product of this journey.

Among the Indigenous research traits described by Margaret Kovach (2009) our project aims to encourage a decolonizing focus (p. 30) by exploring the concept of ancestral pain that leads to the lateral violence behaviors that serve as the driving force behind our repeated pattern of self-defeat. Kovach also notes Indigenous research provides (p. 80-91):

- hope for positive transformation,
- is a collective responsibility,
- an emphasis on the importance of action and
- that subjectivity is inherent due to the relational and interconnected nature of the Indigenous learning process.

These factors confirm our attraction to the qualitative, participatory Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) methodology developed by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993). Extensive research findings show a greater success rate of community initiatives when using the positive based foundational premise of ABCD (Cunningham & Mathie, 2002). Communities engage in asset mapping exercises and opportunity discovery, rather than from a needs-based approach. When a community collectively gathers and immerse themselves in the “hope for positive transformation” (Kovach) people become inspired. It is this flexible, inclusive, grassroots, positive style of interaction that is so appealing to our Aboriginal community. This researcher had the opportunity to be introduced to the community work and courses at Coady International Institute and was surprised to realize this University is better known outside of Canada. There have been numerous projects implemented around the world that utilize this asset based tool (Coady International Institute, n.d.). The time has come for us to conduct our own research in which we determine our reality and our future.

Last, but certainly not least, is the review of Fyre Jean Graveline’s (1998) research work entitled *Circle Works*. It is used primarily in chapter 9- Conclusion, in a method of concluding the research report, rather than offering conclusions. Through the process of our project, we have come to recognize and embrace the Power of Circle. It is with this ancient Aboriginal research tool, we found and shared our voice, our values and our vision for our culture.

METHODOLOGY

Wilson (2008) defines the word methodology as “the science of finding things out”(p. 34) and in the University of Victoria’s Community Development course on research we learned about many Western based methodological theories such as positivism, critical theory, constructivism, and grounded theory to name a few. But the researcher was intrigued by the Indigenous methodology theory, and our project attempts to show the elements of this method.

Many Indigenous researchers have struggled to comfortably place “our way of finding things out” within these mainstream theories (Cajete, 2000, Kovach, 2009, Wilson, 2008). So what is an Indigenous group to do? Fortunately there are Indigenous researchers that have come before us to blaze a trail. This trail is leading the way for other researchers to develop their frameworks for “finding things out”.

Kovach (2009) offers us an Indigenous research framework that can help lead our work and answer our question: have the Metis followed an Indigenous Methodology?

Methodological Framework

Kovach positions Indigenous theory of knowledge (epistemology) in the centre with the components of research circling this Indigenous cultural centre (p.45). The components are:

a) Researcher preparation- refers to an internal personal process in which the researcher engages (p.49). Kovach does explain that although this is not a new process to research, experiential processes carry much more validity in Indigenous research. As an example, my personal journey began with recognizing my own perpetrations of lateral violence (although I did not understand this concept at the time) and as I my search continued, I began to understand my victimization as well. Defining myself as a perpetrator was unnerving, requiring deep reflection which then led to the next component.

b) Research preparation- this section concentrates on Indigenous people discussing our issues among ourselves (p. 51). This is not to disrespect a solid academic literature review, but, especially for our project, there was precious little published research we could access. Having said this, for Indigenous peoples, a literature review would be an adjunct, not the focus of research preparation. Relationship is key, and in fact, the research would not occur without pre-existing relationships among the participants. Hence, Indigenous groups are often accused of nepotism. This being said, the participants for our project were invited by following the example of one of our Elders- we invited women to whom we had a relational connection. This does not mean we were all related by blood ties, but everyone was connected to at least one other person in the group. Over the course of the project design, we had approximately twenty (20) women at any given time, as a core working group. When we finally all met in Nelson for the implementation phase, we were sixteen (16) women and the trust level was immediately high; we “knew” everyone. The place held significance for us, as our current Metis

political organization, Metis Nation British Columbia (MNBC), had signed the Constitution there several years earlier. Even though our group had experienced challenges with MNBC, this did not take away from the symbol of Metis self-governance. Our project was strengthened not only by this symbol, but it was brought to our attention that Women's Day was on March 8, the first day of our project, yet this had not been planned. In fact, many other revelations occurred throughout the weekend which were accepted as data that confirmed our project was on the correct path. For Indigenous groups gathering all the information leads to validity, or as Kovach suggests, the better word is credibility in Indigenous circles. This is another reason why community based participatory research model appeals to Indigenous groups, as validity and credibility exists for the community, by the community. According to Wilson (2008), the search for truth takes a different process in Indigenous research- rather than dissecting the parts, we look at the whole. We consider the relationships, the accountability, and the benefit not just for the individual but for the community as well. Rather than using a cause and effect argument of proof, circular reasoning is implemented. "Knowledge cannot be owned or discovered but is merely a set of relationships that may be given a visible form" (p. 127).

c) Decolonizing & Ethics- Elders tell us that in order to move forward, we must look back. Although Indigenous groups are told (either subtly or directly) to "just get over it", it is important to know where you come from, to know where you are going. Kovach makes a good argument that colonization is not finished; it is seen in the dominant systems such as economic, education, health, etc. (p. 76). If our project had not looked at the effects of colonization, we would still think the lateral violence behaviours that are exhibited in our Indigenous communities are related to individual personality conflicts rather than from a systemic basis.

d) Gathering knowledge- Kovach explains that making space for conversation is critical in Indigenous research (p. 99). Our research project consciously created this space although in retrospect we determined a two and one half (2.5) day workshop did not offer enough time for all the components of our project. The other aspect to gathering knowledge is allowing participant voices to be heard and acknowledged (Kovach, p.99). To ensure this process, the participants requested the gathered data be transferred into computer files, which was done and distributed. It was met with a positive response, with one Elder offering gratitude for being heard (Donna Wright, 2013, personal conversation). It must be added here that outside research is cited in this report, as per University requirements. Having said this, it is hoped that upon reading this report, the participants of our project will benefit from the knowledge that our Elders and Ancestors' wisdom is making its way into published research material that is being accepted by institutions of higher learning.

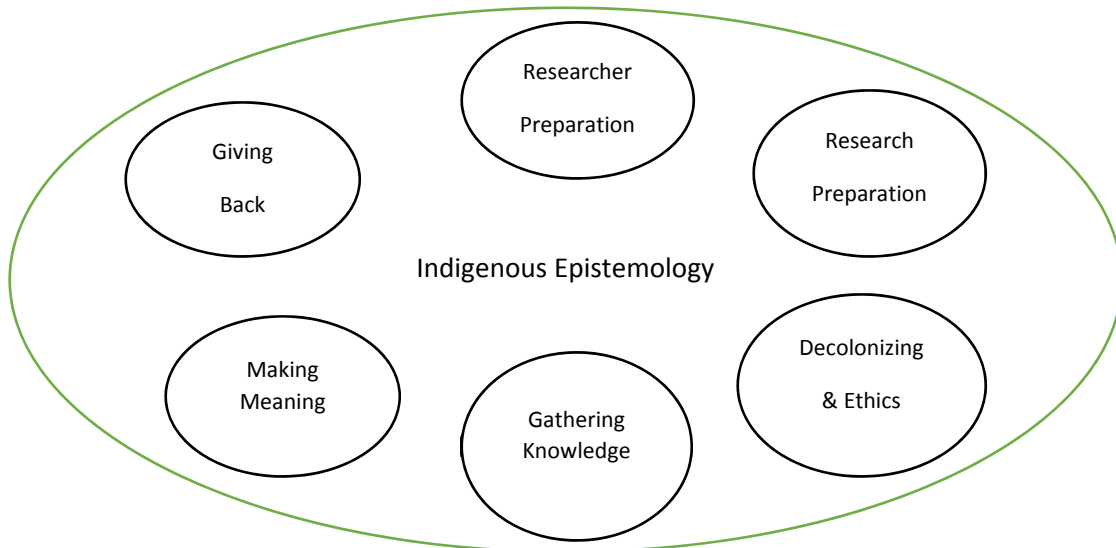
e) Making meaning- "In an oral culture, story lives, develops, and is imbued with the energy of the dynamic relationship between teller and listener" (Kovach, 2009, p. 101). Although I am honored to have been told by my Elder, that she felt heard with my attempt to capture the essence of the project's gathered information, the written word has its limits. Many of the participants use the computer for communication, but when we "really" need to get a message through, we call one another; as it offers a better

opportunity to access the energy that Kovach suggests. Making meaning is also not a one-time event. This project has a life of its own, and the interpretation of its data is an on-going process. However, process can cause difficulty in the dominant system as experienced with one of our funders. As our group discussed issues and ideas, I would report changes to our grant application and at one point, was met with resistance. Mainstream system is not accustomed to process; applications are typically submitted with a systematic, linear plan in place.

f) Giving back- Kovach explains that ethics and giving back are interrelated (p. 147). Trust is necessary and is earned by following protocol, ensuring the security of our sacred knowledges, honoring the validity of our knowledges and by giving back. Our project group clarified that pictures would not be taken of the sacred ceremonies; it was determined the group would see all documents related to the gathered data, including this report, before its release outside of the project parameters. The women were made aware that confidentiality is limited due to project specifics that indicate who we are, where we live and where we gathered, but the women were told their names would not be used without their permission. As stated by Kovach the research must assist, be relevant and make sense to the community and the research must belong to the community. In fact, it creates another relationship (p. 149).

As noted by Kovach, there are no directional arrows as Indigenous processes are fluid and organic rather than strictly linear and systematic.

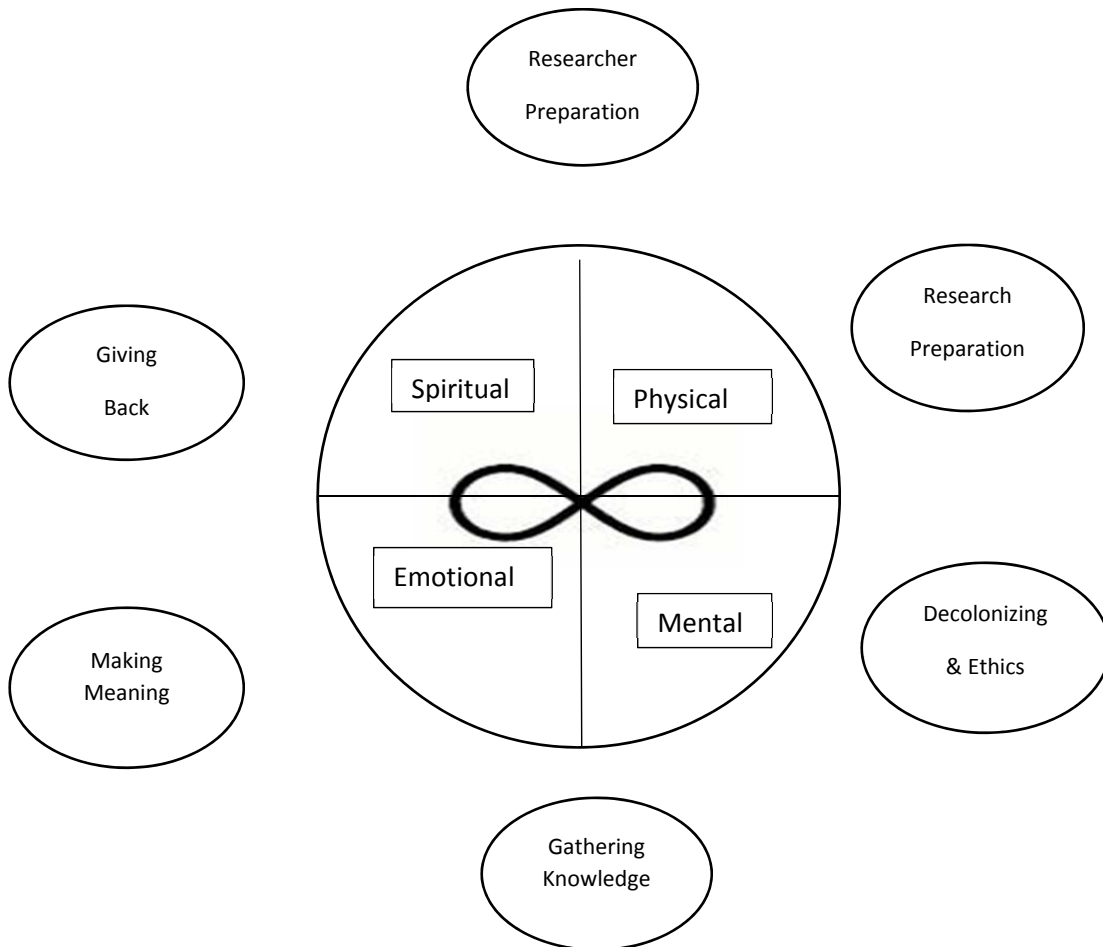
Figure 1



In an attempt to make this model more relevant (related) to the Metis consciousness of our project, I include the following image that incorporates, at the centre, the Infinity symbol used by the Metis to signify our two parent cultures, the connection of two parts into a whole, and the wish for the continuation of the Metis culture. The Medicine Wheel is composed of the four (4) directions that reminds us to incorporate the mental,

emotional, physical and spiritual aspects (the interrelatedness of all) when conducting research, and was used as a guide for our project. One of our Metis Elders commented that “it is in my nature to think in fours” (Donna Wright, personal conversation, 2012). Kovack’s framework then circles our core.

Figure 2



Aspects to research

Kovach (2009) states that we start by acknowledging the fact that we are “privileging” (p. 43) Indigenous knowledges. She then tells us there are three (3) aspects to research: we must name and acknowledge 1) the cultural knowledges that guide our choices, 2) the methods used and 3) interpretation of the knowledge gained is to be given back in a useful and relevant manner.

Privilege

For the Metis, to acknowledge we are a Canadian Indigenous group is in itself a privilege. One of our project findings is our recognition of the devastating effects that have arisen through the divisive actions of colonization. This is not to say, we are encouraging all people to be the same, rather we are suggesting that Indigenous people can identify as a group that share a basic relational philosophy and that we can celebrate the different cultural manifestations of that similarity. As an example, within the Metis, there are distinct groups. Some groups can link their heritage to the Red River Valley which gives them legal recognition as a distinct Aboriginal group under Canadian law in regards to the Powley decision of 2003 (Canadian Legal Information Institute, 2003) and are informally known as the “large M Metis”. Whereas the “small m Metis” are of mixed First Nation and European ancestry as well, but are not yet recognized as a distinct Aboriginal community by dominant system law. There is a growing movement among the Metis to acknowledge our own history rather than let others determine this for us.

Three (3) Aspects:

Cultural Knowledges

Our cultural knowledges have been born of the mixing of our parent cultures that have provided us with an ability to innovatively blend and appreciate conflicting ideologies. Not that other groups have not been able to adapt different ideologies, but for the Metis, we were not accepting an outside ideology, instead these conflicting ideologies exist within and we have found a way to form a new cultural identity from the parts. A resilience and independence of spirit is seen in the Metis and may be attributed to learning to adapt between two worlds rather than adopt one or the other. This premise would make interesting further research.

Methods used

Included were several Indigenous based methods such as sharing circles in which we described our individual and cultural values and stories. The emotions of these experiences were reflected in our laughter and tears. We held ceremonies and shared protocols that acknowledged our healing techniques, our connection to the land and to our ancestors. We also integrated the principles of Community Based Participatory Research (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993) as the idea for this project was conceived and developed by the community. We incorporated the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) method (Kretzmann and McKnight, 2005) as its philosophy fit in well with Kovach’s Indigenous purpose of research: hope for positive transformation, is a collective responsibility, places an emphasis on the importance of action, and that subjectivity is inherent due to the relational and interconnected nature of the Indigenous learning process.

Interpretation of Knowledge

Overview:

Qualitative data was gathered by the participants in sharing circles (focus groups) and open ended questions were used in the evaluation process. The gathered data was recorded by the facilitator(s) and participants in written form on flip chart paper and sticky notes. Also included is quantitative data gathering in the form of member attendance, how many regions have been represented, and the actual budget costs.

For the evaluation gathering process each participant was asked to share her thoughts and feelings on what the entire project process has meant to her through a one word summarization. I, as researcher asked permission to record these words and this was granted. Also, the participants were asked to take time to reflect on the process once they got home, and several testimonials were received through email. Of the three (3) project facilitators, two (2) have taken on the “post-project” responsibilities of communication and moving the project into the next desired phases.

The participants asked for the gathered information to be transferred into computer files which as researcher, I have done and sent to each participant.

For reader and university convenience, I have referred to myself as the researcher and the other women as participants, but the community based research reality is that each participant is a researcher, and should have the title of participant-researcher, including myself. There were three of us that planned the details of implementation and facilitated the process, but we were and are, all researchers.

Asset Based Community Development:

The ABCD tool was incorporated to generate qualitative data in the form of community maps. These maps are a collection of community resources. Although no formal process was initiated to define the word community, the participants took the project on a journey in what could be described as a cultural community. As researcher, when I was asked by the participants if they were proceeding in on the correct path, I responded with the confirmation that this was our project, and by definition, we were on the correct path. We discussed our need for validation coupled with our concern of doubting our abilities and how we saw this barrier as an example of the effects of colonization ingrained in our belief system.

Collective analysis and dissemination:

It was necessary to add the definition of a few words as this section is critical to understanding the difference between Western and Indigenous science approaches.

Analysis “is the process of breaking a complex topic or substance into smaller parts to gain a better understanding of it” (Wikipedia, n.d., Analysis) and is an essential part of the Western scientific method (Wikipedia, n.d., Scientific Method).

In contrast Cajete (2000) states “the perspective of Native science goes beyond objective measurement, honoring the primacy of direct experience, interconnectedness, relationship, holism, quality and value. Its definition is based on its own merits, conceptual framework, and practice and orientation in the tribal contexts in which it is expressed” (p.66). Therefore for Indigenous people, it would be more appropriate to use the word *assess* which means- “to determine the value, significance, or extent of; appraise” (The Free Dictionary, n.d., Assess) rather than the word *analysis* to describe our process of determining the significance of the gathered information.

Dissemination refers to a communication system of sending and receiving without a guarantee that feedback will be sent from the receiver. The Latin root of the word means to scatter seeds (Wikipedia, n.d., Dissemination) and offers a beautiful metaphor that can be appreciated by Indigenous peoples. We will share the information of our project with our geographical community members, University members and perhaps others as well, with the intent we are spreading seeds; some will germinate, and others may not. Nevertheless we are willing to take a chance, as any farmer does, in the belief that there will be a valuable harvest.

So now that we have determined this section is better titled as “Collective Assessment and Dissemination” we can proceed.

Once the maps were created, the group was guided through the assessment and dissemination process. They were asked to collate, make connections and links and determine any opportunities keeping the research question as a guide: “How will the BC Metis Women better define and heal themselves, their families and their Nation while examining their history, exploring the current assets and opportunities to develop a strategic plan for their future?”

They were asked to share their dream for the Metis, through an organic process they verbalized and documented the values held and they were encouraged to develop formal vision and mission statements. Although originally it was thought the Masters project would most likely end at this point, the project can be described from an Indigenous perspective as a living being. For the purposes of this report, an “end” will be determined, but in no way does this indicate an end to the project at this point in time. It was expected further work would be necessary to move to the next stages, and indeed this will be reflected in chapter 8- Recommendations.

In terms of validity, this project in its purest form reflects Community Based Participatory Research. It is a research project conceived, designed and implemented by a cultural community and it is the participant-researchers who

decide if the assessment results are valid. Can this validity be transferred to other groups? Perhaps; it would be presumptuous from an Indigenous perspective to assume transferability. Other groups would decide results for themselves.

FINDINGS

It is suggested by the University of Victoria, School of Public Administration Guide for the Preparation of Master's Projects (2011, p. 29), that this section is reported in a systematic fashion listing our findings from each of the components of the project. Our findings are based mostly on qualitative data that was gathered by asking broad questions and by recording in writing the varied responses by the participants. With the advice of my Master's supervisor, Dr. Budd Hall, this section will continue in the Aboriginal storytelling tradition, rather than simply a listing of facts and figures.

Our quantitative findings come from two sources: first from the project itself, and secondly from the "community survey" responses that the participating Elders are completing in regards to community demographics and resources which ties into chapter 8- Recommendations. As explained throughout this report, Indigenous people understand that everything contains a life force, an energy, and this project is no different. For the purposes of this report a beginning and an end had to be determined, therefore the detailed data from the community survey will not be added to this report. However, the need to gather community data arises from the recommendations in chapter 8 to enable the project up-scaling grant writing process. Our quantitative data from the project shows that at any given time, there were twenty (20) women who were involved with the conception and design of the project. Sixteen (16) women attended the implementation of the project. Three (3) British Columbia regions were represented: Thompson-Okanagan, Kootenays, and the Northeast. Ages ranged from mid-thirties (30's) to those in their sixties (60).

The researcher compiled the gathered qualitative data and created summaries, as per participants request and each woman has received the information via email. Inferences and comments were made to which I asked the women to add or change as they saw fit. The responses I received was one of gratitude at the tremendous amount of work and to having been heard.

Healing Techniques

The Drum Making Ceremony [Appendix A] was a full day, experiential process. As per participant and University request, I attempted to put to words, a spiritual, physical, emotional and mental process. The following is the summary our findings of the drum making ceremony that was compiled and sent to each participant:

How does a Healing and Community Development project begin? Well, it first began with acknowledging there was a pain in our culture and communities; a pain that seemed much deeper than just "personality conflicts". A pain that we started calling Ancestral Pain. We also knew there was much need for community development as well, and that this pain often got in the way of working well and productively together. After

my own personal experience working in my Metis community and experiencing this ancestral pain first-hand, having several discussions with Donna Wright and others, I decided to pursue my education when I stumbled across the online UVic Masters in Community Development program. Looking back, I can see there are no accidents, no mistakes. All these pieces fell into place as we needed them. Hence, the BC Metis Women Healing and Community Development project was conceived.

How did we include the drum? It wasn't easy. Some Metis claimed the drum "wasn't Metis"; it was First Nations. This brought the question "What is Metis?" to the surface. Are we not a culture that is a *mixture* of our First Nations and European ancestors? Is it any less Metis to drum than to jig, a dance that we learned from our European family? We managed to blend, mix and weave our two parent cultures (religion, clothing, dance, music, language, technologies) into a unique Metis culture that is still evolving today, because fortunately, we were able to survive the difficult moments of our history.

The enclosed pictures [Appendix A] show the evolution of the drum from its basic elements of wood and animal hide to the transformation of the drum that is used in our healing and celebratory ceremonies.

We honour and give thanks to all our relations (our Ancestors, the four legged, the plants, the water, the tools, each other) that helped us create our drums.

The Aboriginal scientific model (Brant Castelleno, 2000) that I mention in the section on Metis music and dance can be used to explain how we, as Aboriginal people, find meaning and the process of how we learn through: stories, empirical observations rather than experiments separated from the whole, and revelations.

This model helps us to understand how this project was experienced as so powerful by those of us in the project. We shared our stories as Aboriginal peoples, we experienced the workshop fully by making a drum from its basic elements, we were then able to drum the following day, we learned our songs, and in the opening of our drums ceremony, when the lights flickered, many of us spoke to our Ancestors being present and honouring our process. Our tears expressed how important the drum making ceremony was to us that are of mixed cultures, to finally be able to express our "First Nations" traditions. We had been kept away from many of these traditions as they were outlawed and we were shamed into practicing primarily our European traditions.

What did we learn?

In the drum making ceremony, we came to understand the importance of being whole, connected and able to express the totality of our cultural ancestry. The tears that flowed began the release of the Ancestral Pain. We cried not only for ourselves, but for those who came before us and we cried for what we had almost lost.

For those who came before us, their story had many difficult elements. My own personal story which was revealed to me only a few short years ago, tells of my great-grandmother who married at fourteen years of age, to die in childbirth at the age of nineteen in labour with her fourth pregnancy. This story is not unique to my family; it is told and known by too many Aboriginal families.

What we almost lost is our cultural identity. Although I was raised with the confusing dichotomy of both pride and shame in being Metis, at least, I knew I was Metis. I have met many who were raised not knowing they were Metis. The period of hiding, of going underground after the Riel Rebellions, held the potential to annihilate the culture more thoroughly than any act of parliament could have achieved.

The drum making ceremony also began the teachings of the power of the circle, and was continued throughout the components of the project. We found power in using words that are more closely aligned with our Aboriginal roots, words like Ceremony and Gatherings. We found power in naming such as Ancestral Pain and lateral violence. The ultimate power was in the Circle, the gathering of and as a people with a deep, genetic and historic Ancestral Pain who found the courage to acknowledge and address this pain deliberately and passionately in physical and symbolic circles of connectedness.

Metis Music and Dance Ceremony [Appendix B], as in the drum ceremony, was a celebratory experiential process of women sharing our cultural traditions. We planned the dance lessons for the evening of the first day and although we anticipated the women being tired from a full day of drum making ceremony, we were not prepared for how tired we would all be. Nevertheless, when the Metis music started playing, most of us rose to the dance floor with renewed energy! Again, as with the drum making ceremony, the summary that was sent to the participants is the following attempt to put to words a spiritual, physical, emotional and mental process:

Louis Riel has been quoted to state: “My people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake, it will be the artists who will give them their spirit back” (Manitoba Metis Federation, 2010). This seems to have come true, as there is a revival of the traditional dance and music in many of our Metis communities. We decided to include the music and dance in our project and Sherry Arko led the group in learning the basic Metis jig step. Metis music CDs and the Asham Stompers DVD (a Metis dance

performance group from Manitoba) was available to facilitate hearing the music style and watching the dance styles of the Metis Jig step.

“...the spirit to dance was firmly ingrained in the Metis from their Native, Scottish and French ancestry. Their most famous dance, called the ‘Red River jig,’ included elements of Native dancing as well as the jigs and reels of the French and Scots” (Harrison, 1985). This quote from the book entitled *Metis: People Between Two Worlds* by Julia D. Harrison gives an historical description of the Metis style dance.

In a previous gathering the researcher attended, the Asham Stompers, shared their knowledge of the origin of the dance and this was shared with the participants of the project. The jig step was designed to attract Voyageurs canoeing past the fort (which is now Winnipeg, MB) in an attempt to encourage trade. This could be called an early tourism plan. In time, the dance style was modified due to the government of the day outlawing Aboriginal dance. In an attempt to hide the fact they were dancing, the Metis developed a rather stiff upper body with most of the dance movement occurring in the legs to prevent detection by any government officials that might be looking through windows.

It was my impression that most of the women from the project enjoyed the dancing and music portion of the project and could link it to community healing as it brings great and fun-filled energy to the whole group, even for those who chose to sit down at times. Shared with the participants was the explanation from the Asham Stompers (personal communication, March 2013) that each dancer hears the music in their own way, and this results in each person developing their own jig step, but as long as the group “hops” in unison, the overall dance looks spectacular. This can be used as an analogy for community development; each person brings her/his uniqueness to the collective. There is a time to express our individualism and a time to “hop in unison”.

I am sure there are any number of dominant society research papers that would explain how music and dance effect healing, but from an Aboriginal scientific model (Brant Castelleno, 2000) that includes: stories, empirical observations rather than experiments separated from the whole, and revelations, we were able discover for ourselves how important our music, dance and songs, our ceremonies, our celebrations with community, our relationships to one another, is to our health as Aboriginal peoples.

What did we learn?

A Blackfoot woman (personal conversation, Serena Provost, August 2012) once shared a delightful and insightful story of her experience with the Metis and dancing. This woman was once at a cultural event where an older Metis couple arrived, walking slowly using canes for support. It was not long into the event, before this Blackfoot woman witnessed the power of Metis music. No sooner had the music begun, this elderly frail couple moved to the floor and dazzled everyone with their jigging abilities until the end of the evening when they proceeded to leave the event, slowly hobbling along with their canes as they departed.

This story embodies and symbolizes the power of Metis music and dance. The music and dance style is a representation of how we successfully combined our two parent cultures and for many of the Metis, it was the last piece of our culture we had been able to retain. Its revival is bringing strength to our circle by reminding us of our ingenuity, our show of respect to our ancestors, and offers us a physical manifestation of Metis pride. Besides, it truly offers a great deal of fun! This *joie de vivre* was instrumental in keeping the Metis culture alive in its darkest moments and as sad as it is to know some Metis families had lost even this last cultural element, we can take solace in the knowledge of its resurgence.

Lateral Violence [Appendix C]. The video *Lateral Violence* (Bearpaw Media Productions, 2006) was viewed by the participants after the drum making ceremony and before the Metis dance ceremony. This made for a very long first day, but it was deemed more reasonable and necessary to introduce the healing concepts prior to working with the asset based community development tool. The intent was to establish a pattern of acknowledging and understanding the pain in our Aboriginal communities before attempting work within the community. This pattern was not lost on the participants, as will be seen in chapter 8- Recommendations. The following is the summary each participant received:

The introduction to the lateral violence video was offered by pinning up three (3) flip chart papers on the wall with the following information below. Also, the facilitator began by sharing her own story of perpetration and victimization in regards to Aboriginal lateral violence. Two analogies used were:

- 1) Fleas in the jar: Place fleas in a sealed jar, slam it on the table repeatedly when the fleas try to make an attempt for freedom, and over time, the fleas will simply cower at the bottom of the jar due to fear of moving and making an effort to get free. Each slam of the jar represents separate colonizing attempts throughout our history. This then flows into the,
- 2) The crabs in the pot: Place crabs in a pot; when one tries to get out, the others pull it down. This is due to fear of what will happen to the whole (see fleas in a jar analogy), if one crab tries to find freedom. However,

the Aboriginal community is ready to rewrite this analogy and encourage its climbing crabs to get out of the pot, and keeping with traditional collective ideologies, the free crab is then to reach back down the pot, to bring the others up and out.

The answers to the following questions below were provide by the video Lateral Violence (Bearpaw Media Productions, 2006) that was viewed by all participants. Unfortunately, not much time was spent exploring the concept of lateral violence; rather the video served as an introduction.

What is it? Lateral violence is a worldwide occurrence, however Aboriginal Lateral Violence specifically describes how and why there is violence between Aboriginal peoples; we have become our own oppressor. It is a cycle of abuse which insidiously inhabits our communities. Insidious, because for the most part, many people diagnose the violence at an individual level because we are unaware of its systemic basis (Native Women's Association of Canada, n.d.).

What are the behaviours? (Native Women's Association of Canada, n.d.).

Shaming, infighting, social exclusion, gossiping, scapegoating, sarcasm, back stabbing, sabotage, jealousy, physical violence, name calling, whining, withholding of information and infighting are some of the common behaviours experienced and witnessed within Aboriginal communities. A connection of these behaviours to bullying behaviours (Wikipedia, Bullying, n.d.) can be made and this connection helps us to realize oppression is learned and goes beyond Aboriginal communities.

Why does it happen? (Native Women's Association of Canada, n.d.).

Roots of Lateral Violence are based in colonization, oppression, intergenerational trauma and ongoing racism and prejudice. This flip chart contained this information only to provide an opportunity for discussion.

Definition of Colonization: (Wikipedia, n.d., Colonization).

"Colonization may be used as a method of absorbing and assimilating foreign peoples into the culture of the imperial country, and thus destroying any remnant of the foreign cultures that might threaten the imperial territory over the long term by inspiring rebellion". In their article, Aboriginal Lateral Violence, The Native Women's Association of Canada (n.d.) explains that lateral violence occurs because of suppressed feelings of anger, shame and rage. It is these repressed feelings that lead to the lateral violence behaviours expressed in our communities (p. 3).

Anyone can be a target or perpetrator (Native Women's Association of Canada, n.d.).

No one is immune. The key is to become aware of the concept of lateral violence; name it, understand its roots. This will aid in moving the behaviours from the individuals and place it on the systemic cause. The next step is in realizing we are more than our history; we can move beyond the shackles of violence.

Antidotes to Lateral Violence (Kweykway Consulting, n.d.)

We did not have the chance to explore Lateral Violence thoroughly, and therefore did not explore methods to counterbalance the effects, but a BC coast group called Kweykway Consulting (this group has been added to the list of resources) offer seven (7) techniques some of which were heard in the Lateral Violence video. 1) Increase positivity. 2) Reduce toxins- blame, contempt, stonewalling, complaints, and gossip. 3) Create space for self-awareness and awareness of others. 4) Practice direct and positive communication. 5) Carry power consciously and own it. 6) Develop role flexibility. 7) Listen to your body and develop the ability to respond positively to triggers. With this project's train the trainer focus, it was especially important to provide this information to all participants as we did not have the time to discuss these points in depth. Each leader had the opportunity to view and listen to the lateral violence video and have this information in writing as a supplement to their work in the community.

What did we learn?

We have learned lateral violence is a complex concept and that it will be the most challenging component of the up-scaled project (see chapter 8- Recommendations) to deliver in our communities. Our first step is in laying the seed by introducing this concept of lateral violence. There is a denial that exist in our culture. We have heard that we are "luckier" than our First Nations cousins; our history is different and we avoided the dependency trap that the reserve system created. This is indeed true, but we do not seem to want to acknowledge what impacts colonization did have on us. We are Canada's Forgotten People; we did not belong in either group. We became "our own boss" out of necessity; it was not a random genetic mutation.

Not only have we been victims of lateral violence, but we also are the perpetrators, so secondly, another challenge of this concept will have the leaders be prepared to gently inform and guide people into the realm of accountability and responsibility. It is not easy to face the demon within, but having said this, with a systemic understanding of the roots of lateral violence, we can better understand our behaviours and how to transform them into more positive actions.

Thirdly, we also realized we must deliver Aboriginal history lessons that go beyond what we learned in the school system. We must have the knowledge of our past to understand where we are in the present and how to journey into the future. One of the lateral violence behaviours is the withholding of information, which we learned well from the oppressors. Without information, we are kept blinded to the full picture. This explains why many Metis explain lateral violence behaviours at an individual level; the whole picture is not revealed.

To add to the complexity, colonization is a global event; it is not isolated only to our North American Aboriginal groups. When we delve into history, we see all is connected. When Europeans came to these shores in the late 1400's it was fueled by an attempt to feed the economic system they had created; a system that encourages individualism and requires unlimited resources for survival (Wikipedia, Capitalism, n.d.). This was in sharp contrast to the tribal, collective based economy of the First Nations (Cajete, 2000) and resulted in brutal takeover events by Europeans, either by accident or design, beginning with the smallpox epidemic, the formation of European government and subsequent governance of all peoples of this land, acts and policies designed to annihilate Aboriginal title and Aboriginal economic destruction as seen in the decimation of the buffalo, to name but a few events.

This pattern of colonization was seen in many countries and a variety of lobby and activists groups today besides works by such authors as Marx and Weber, attribute the effects of this insatiable economic appetite to many of our environmental and social ills seen worldwide. It is from this knowledge and in making connections from history to our present situation and to our value base that we can proceed into the future on a stronger foundation.

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD). (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). [Appendix D]

A thirty-five (35) page handout on the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) tool was given to each participant of the BC Metis Women Healing and Community Development Project. The focus of the pilot project was Train the Trainer, therefore a handout was designed by the researcher to provide written information as a reference for participants when facilitating sessions in their own community. This handout offers an introduction, philosophy of ABCD, explanation of the components, tools such as the Leaky Bucket and Conversation Cafes, implications of ABCD, an overview of project management using planning, monitoring and evaluation, how to account for unplanned outcomes and changes, a definition of lateral violence, symptoms and antidotes. Source of information references is provided.

It was described to the participants that all the created asset maps are brought together at the end, perhaps in an exercise such as a Conversation Café, to help the working group

come up with opportunities for the community. It was also explained that our society has spent much time, effort and money “fighting” problems. This process of discovering and mapping our assets and then developing opportunity from those assets is life giving, positive and encouraging approach to community development. Discussions were had in terms of the disbursement of energy; many spoke to the relationship between thought and the formation of reality; whatever our energy is focused on, is what is created.

The following sections offer the themes and a summary of the gathered information that was sent to the participants. ABCD offered a simple, relevant community development tool easily clarified and implemented in communities.

Who Are We? [Appendix E] (Human Resource component of ABCD)

The researcher/facilitator explained this exercise develops a map of who is in the community and what they can do. The process can be facilitated in different manners. The working group can start by making a list of the people in the room, or people in the community. It can be added to at any time; it is a component in constant flux as people come in or leave the community. People can be added beyond any geographical community as well. Three (3) visual cues were offered to give the working group an idea of how to map people’s skills, qualities, abilities, etc. These cues were derived from an exercise from the Indigenous Women in Community Leadership program at Coady International Institute at St Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. The visual cues ask to define people using gifts of the 1) heart, 2) hands and 3) head.

The participants decided to map their own group. The first two names on the board received information such as “gifts of the mind” or “gifts of the heart”, but it did not take long before the women started to add specific details of what they saw in the person. It became a process of positive qualities gift giving and receiving. The women saw the potential and flexibility of this component; using a community economic development focus, this map could become a list of people and their skills.

How Do We Gather? [Appendix F] (Associations and Institutions component of ABCD)

This component of the ABCD was described as a listing of the groups of which we may know, or to which we belong. It was noted, that in giving each ABCD component an Aboriginal title may have helped to give rise to our unique interpretation. This working group seem to define themselves as a cultural community more so than a geographic community. The group was asked to write or draw their impressions of how we gather, on flip chart paper along with coloured markers placed on the table that the

participants sat around. In this component, the question- how do we gather- brought to mind words and symbols that described family, friends, Aboriginal symbols, the importance of laughter, music, dance, celebration, ceremony, acceptance, recognition, healing and connection, honor and respect, safety, mentoring, trust and spirituality. There were four flip chart papers which repeated these themes. The question, how we gather, was indeed answered; it was important for the women to state their values, what is important to us, and how this manifests itself when we gather. Listing our associations and institutions could occur in future workshops with a different focus.

What is our geography? [Appendix G] (Natural and Physical Resources component of ABCD)

This component creates a map of our natural and physical resources. The group started by stating words such as air, land, water, then quickly made it their own. Rather than list the physical resources, the themes from the list were based more on our natural resources such as our values, the importance of community and its members, happiness, Elders as our “landscape” and the importance of mentoring, our stories, our connections, honoring our culture, acknowledging the betterment of all, our connection to the land, and our sense of humor.

The Leaky Bucket [Appendix H] (Economy exercise component of ABCD)

An explanation was offered on how the Leaky Bucket exercise is implemented with a group. A bucket is drawn on flip chart paper and key community groups are drawn inside the bucket: local business, government, and households (citizens). From the top of the bucket arrows show where the money is brought into the community i.e. jobs outside the community, government transfers, tourism, etc. In the bucket, arrows are placed to determine the flow of money within the community, and at the bottom of the bucket arrows are placed to symbolize how the money is leaked out of the community. In another exercise the community group then decides if there are any opportunities to stop the leak(s) perhaps by generating local business. The potential of this exercise provides a graphic of the generation and distribution of money outside and within a community.

For the purpose of the Metis Women Healing and Community Development Project, we represented a cultural rather than a geographical community. In our leaky bucket we indicated both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community both have input into our Metis community. The

arrows moved around from the bottom to the top of the bucket showing a circle of input and leaking. To minimize the leaking, it was decided mentorship was critical. Skills, knowledge, protocols, etc. need to be shared amongst the members of the community with recognition we must especially provide mentorship to our Youth.

Pulling it together [Appendix I] (Conversation Café)

Brief details were offered on the process of a Conversation Café as several women had already been exposed to this process. Flip chart paper and pens were placed on the table for the women to make some decisions to the question: “where we should go next?” The women chose to start working directly with the question, rather than have all the maps put back up on the wall. There were eight (8) flip chart papers, with the ninth paper a collaborative work of combining the themes of the first eight. The last paper was created as a collective effort. The researcher/facilitator drew a circle to represent the nature of the conversations- the circular, interconnectedness of our expressions and philosophy. Within the circle the women summarized the important points:

Spirituality, collaboration, inclusiveness, all genders and all ages included, make safe spaces, balance- know when to quit and when to take initiative, offer encouragement, tenacity, support and pride, honour ourselves and what you can do, strengthen ourselves, our families and our communities, TEAM- Together Everyone Achieves More.

These key phrases offer an excellent summary of the values held and the philosophy followed by this group of Metis women. More than this, it also represents the hope for the future and lays a foundation for how further work will proceed in the various communities.

Evaluation [Appendix J]

On the final day, the participants were asked to put forward one word to describe their feelings and impressions of the workshop. One woman was absent on the last day resulting in fifteen (15) rather than sixteen (16) words:

Ancestors, Healing, Thankful, Sisters, Honored, Friends, Enriched, Love, Joyful, Unity, Connection, Full, Grateful, Strength and Song.

Other comments women had made towards the end of the project was their sense of gratitude, they were pleased to have gained new knowledge along with gaining more ancestral knowledge. The collaboration, humour and ceremony were considered important pieces of the whole project.

Having made a drum “from scratch” along with the ceremony and teachings was seen as valuable and essential to community as the whole process brought us together, sharing, learning and fully engaging in knowing our drum. It made the opening drum ceremony very powerful for the group.

The Metis dance and music brought increased energy into the group, especially when everyone was getting tired. We were able to share laughter and enjoyment and offered an excellent ending to a long day.

Naming the behaviours we have experienced in our communities as lateral violence and understanding its systemic rather than individual cause is empowering and aided in understanding the need for healing. But healing is more than a treatment; it is a process of daily life that weaves ceremony, celebration and work.

What did we learn?

We identified as a cultural community rather than geographic and this may be attributed to the fact we were from different towns, or it may go deeper than that, and relate to the fact the Metis are a landless people with a long nomadic history.

We learned interpretation is based on the participants, and realize we must take this into account with the desire to upscale the project. Although we can have general and broad outcomes, we will not be able to predict specific results.

We identified our value base and allowed ourselves the space to know one another with an attitude of gift-giving and noted how this process brought us closer together.

We came in not knowing what to expect even though we had designed the project, but we did know we were fueled by the passion of feeling the time had come to heal, to work together harmoniously, to accept ourselves as Aboriginal women and to discover our individual and collective strength. Through the course of the project we came to understand our need for daily ceremony, celebration and work, and how this leads to healthy lives and communities.

What more did we learn?

A point form summary was sent to the participants and included the comments made in retrospect of the project through email communications.

In subsequent projects, make break times much more formal; women tend to keep working. In up-scaling this project, we will need to offer the components of the project over a longer period of time. A two and one half day (2.5) gathering was too intense and each day was too long.

In each component it is important to engage participants in a process of learning and sharing. This atmosphere is created by reinforcing that the project is owned by the participants and that there are no incorrect responses.

It is vital to Metis health to acknowledge all the cultures that exist in our DNA. It was very empowering to be able to acknowledge and honor our First Nations along with our European ancestry. We finally felt we could allow our story to be shared: among ourselves firstly and secondly with others. We were able to share our story with in an environment of acceptance and love from each other and this provided the space needed for healing.

It is vital to Aboriginal peoples to engage in circles/groups that encourage and facilitate the sense of family. We ate together, we danced and drummed together, we smudged and made space for our ancestors by providing extra chairs, we engaged in ceremony together. We laughed and cried together. We accepted one another's pain, story, humor and process.

As the Metis, we are still learning our First Nations ancestors' ceremony protocols but we also realized how important it was to allow ceremony to take on its own process instead of strictly adhering to one version of protocol. As an example, the drum opening ceremony took on its own process as each individual woman opened her drum and joined in the song of the whole circle as most of us were not familiar with protocol. The ceremony was so powerful, the lights flickered and the tears flowed. Our Metis Elder, Donna Wright, who has been at several drum opening ceremonies stated she had never been part of anything as powerful.

Can this project be completely replicated? We suspect not. This core group of women are unique, as will every other group to which we will deliver the components of this project.

Researcher's Personal learnings:

Upon initial reflection two key words arose for me: spiritual and uniting (of Nations). It is the honoring of the relations that helps form community. Tenacity combined with flexibility is a good thing; we learned that trust in the process is critical to success. We need to be open and patient enough to see, hear and overall sense the unfolding and learn to apply action at appropriate times.

Just because not everyone is on your side, doesn't mean you should not go ahead. Find your "Tribe", align yourself with like-minded people. If the work is meant to be, the resources are provided.

Nature teaches us diversity is the key to survival. Without the exchange of different ideas, it is unlikely we would have survived as a species. Collaboration is an essential skill to survival as it allows the space needed for each voice to be heard, for each idea to be assessed and built upon.

For reader convenience, other Appendices include: Participant Consent Form (Appendix K), the Registration Form (Appendix L), Project Agenda (Appendix M) Certificate of Participation (Appendix N), Letter of Permission for the Conduct of Aboriginal Research (Appendix O) and the University of Victoria, Human Research Ethics Board Certificate of Approval (Appendix P).

DISCUSSION

The University of Victoria, School of Public Administration Guide for the Preparation of Master's Projects (2011, p. 30) suggests the Discussion chapter be an integration of the research with an aim to connect the research question, the research objectives, the findings, and the literature review.

It also asks for an analysis of this information, but the process we have taken is to assess the information as suggested by Cajete (2000). In chapter 5- Methodology- we mention that Cajete claims: "The perspective of Native science goes beyond objective measurement, honoring the primacy of direct experience, interconnectedness, relationship, holism, quality and value. Its definition is based on its own merits, conceptual framework, and practice and orientation in the tribal contexts in which it is expressed" (p. 66). Therefore for Indigenous people, it would be more appropriate to use the word *assess* which means- "to determine the value, significance, or extent of; appraise" (The Free Dictionary, n.d., Assess) rather than the word *analysis* to describe our process of determining the significance of the gathered information.

Offered below is a reminder of 1) the research question and 2) the objectives of the research from chapter 2-Introduction, 3) summary of the findings and 4) summary of the literature review.

Research question:

"How will the BC Metis Women better define and heal themselves, their families and their Nation while examining their history, exploring the current assets and opportunities to develop a strategic plan for their future?"

Objectives:

- 1) The client wishes to use a community based participatory research (CBPR) process to develop strong community connections and develop a Metis women's community development model which may be transferable to other regions.
- 2) The client wants to make use of a "Train the Trainer" approach to enable reaching the maximum number of community members as possible. As the core group of women participants in the pilot project are trained, they can then implement further gatherings in their respective communities.
- 3) The client will incorporate traditional healing techniques to help mitigate the effects of the lateral violence behaviours long experienced by the Metis, which have previously acted as a barrier to developing strong, decisive community based strategic planning. These healing techniques are derived from our two parent cultures: the First Nations drum ceremony and the Metis dance and music which links to our European ancestors.
- 4) The CBPR project will include the use of an asset based community development tool (ABCD) which leads the community in a mapping exercise to list the positive contributions

and aspects of Metis culture from which opportunities are identified then used in strategic planning sessions.

Summary of Findings

In the section called “Pulling it Together” from chapter 6-Findings, the women were asked to answer the question “where we should go next”? The women summarized their work with the following words: Spirituality, collaboration, inclusiveness, all genders and all ages included, make safe spaces, Balance- know when to quit, when to take initiative, offer encouragement, tenacity, support and pride, honour ourselves and what you can do, strengthen ourselves, our families and our communities, TEAM- together everyone achieves more.

These key words offer an excellent summary of the values held and the philosophy followed by this group of Metis women. More than this, it also represents the hope for the future and lays a foundation for how further work will proceed in the various communities.

Further, In the Evaluation section, the women summed up the project with one word which captures the overall impression of the project gathering:

Ancestors, Healing, Thankful, Sisters, Honored, Friends, Enriched, Love, Joyful, Unity, Connection, Full, Grateful, Strength and Song

To summarize the Learning Overview section of the same chapter, we came to understand, that for Indigenous people, combining ceremony, work and celebration, is not just necessary at this point in time to help us heal, rather it has always been a community necessity. Our ancestors gathered holistically, these parts were not separated by time and space; they were integrated into the aspects of our daily lives. This is what made this project especially powerful by remembering to include the four (4) direction teachings; the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of life. Indeed, even though we have made some assessments of the overall timing and intensity of the project realizing that any up-scaling of this project will require time and space for community processing, it is equally important that the integrity of the project stay intact. Even though the components of the project may be separated, ceremony, celebration and work will weave throughout each future gathering.

Summary of Literature Review

As stated in chapter 4- Literature Review, one of the differences between Indigenous and Western research respectively, is in tendency to assess rather than analyze our environment. Wilson (2008) aptly describes why this is so. “Criticizing or judging would imply that I know more about someone else’s work and the relationships that went into it than they do themselves” (p. 43). Furthermore, Cajete (2000) states “Relationship is the

cornerstone of tribal community, and the nature and expression of community is the foundation of tribal identity” (p. 86). This way of being, this philosophy, this orientation was at the core of our project and it was our Elders that led us in remembering.

The recounting of our story holds its own power. In chapter 4, an overview of the Metis story takes us on a cultural journey of discovery of who, what, where, how and why the Metis are who we are and how we have been impacted by our history. It also explores the importance for humans to culturally identify and attach.

Lastly, this chapter offers an overview of the literature used directly in relation to the project itself. As Kovach (2009) states, Indigenous research should be based on positive transformation, include collective responsibility, promote action, and has us remember that Indigenous learning recognizes the process is subjective, relational and all is interconnected (p. 80-91). Although we did not know of this author when we began this journey, we had this understanding nevertheless. It is what led us to directly address the pain in our culture by using traditional healing techniques and led us to promote a positive view of the future through the use of the Asset Based Community Development tool (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993).

Discussion

Now that we have had an opportunity to refresh our memories, we can now discuss the connections we made and the knowledge we have gained. This is where the difficulty begins; how to make linear an interconnected, circular process?

In his book, Cajete (2000) proposes there is a Native science that has a different philosophical basis than Western science. Both are methods of “coming to know”; Native science is a coming to know of “rightful relationships” (p.80). He goes on to say “In the final analysis, Native science as the outward expression of Native relationship to the natural world is a philosophical *ideal*. It is an ideal conveyed through native cosmologies, community, relationships to plants, animals, landscape, and the cosmos. It is an ideal that must be sought. It is an ideal that must be remembered and re-remembered through art, ceremony, story, ways of community, and personal experience. We human beings are forgetful creatures, and we need cosmology, philosophy, and lived experience at a personal and communal level to remember our life-sustaining relationships” (p. 82).

This succinctly summarizes our learnings through the process of conceiving, designing, implementing and now reflecting on our project. But such a summary seems a bit like cheating, so Cajete offers a Process of Native Science model (pp. 66-71) that is comprised of traditional methodological elements and tools that provides us an opportunity to explain our project learnings in more detail. Kovach’s (2009) research framework offers an excellent broad model to guide the process of Indigenous research, whereas Cajete’s Process of Native Science model offers a detailed framework in which to attach the

research findings. The first sentence or paragraph of each element is a summary of Cajete's definition. The second paragraph describes how it was applied in our project.

How will the BC Metis women better define and heal themselves, their families and their Nation while examining their history, exploring the current assets and opportunities to develop a strategic plan for their future? We did the following work:

Observation: Traditionally, this skill was learned watching the processes of nature.

-We made observations related to the political, social, physical and spiritual environments at each phase of the project.

Experiment: There should be no attempt made to alter the natural environment, with practical experiments used only to find efficient, innovative and harmonious ways to live with nature.

-Our project was an experiment to help us find a way to live effectively and harmoniously together within our culture. We used observations, our intuition, prior knowledge and experience to develop the components of this project, which was a unique combining of traditional healing techniques with community development working tools as per our project objectives. It was seen as an untried pilot project by funders, but we knew it's time had come; it did not come out of "thin air". As shown in chapter 3 on Background and chapter 4- Literature Review, it was a project born of our history, individually and collectively.

Meaning and understanding: Rather than discovering a predictability or a method of control, Native science's priority is to discover meaning and understanding.

-Our research question itself was multifaceted asking us to look at ourselves holistically to determine who we are, what we need for healing, why we need to heal, and what we need to move forward in a positive manner.

Objectivity: Native science reflects the understanding that objectivity is founded on subjectivity.

-We have been able to separate this project into its "objective" parts- the healing techniques and the community development tool for our work gatherings, however we are well aware that the project held in March was subjectively experienced by each woman. It is this information that holds greater credibility and why the evaluation process was directed to ask for each woman's impressions.

Unity: Order and harmony *and* diversity and chaos are the creators of reality.

-One of our greater learnings/findings was earned in making space for process. Even though we had set an agenda in terms of the components of the project (order and

harmony) we also made the space for process (diversity and chaos). It was the women who determined what each component meant to them, and all given data was accepted. This translated into a great sense of power for the women to know there was no “right” or “wrong” response when expressing our own definition of ourselves. The women disclosed they have been conditioned to doubt their own thoughts and ideas and how freeing it was to be heard.

Models: Indigenous models of learning are highly contextual, information is communicated at many levels, are highly representational and require higher level thinking and understanding.

-Our project is a living example of an Indigenous model of learning and our research question allowed for context and complexity. Its objectives represent the relational aspect as we designed a Train the Trainer style project utilizing the community based participatory ABCD tool to build leadership opportunities and to ensure as many people as possible will be able to benefit from future delivery of the project. It is designed to be adaptable in a variety of communities, because the goal is not to expect a particular and predictable result, rather the goal is to engage as many people as possible in ceremony, celebration and work. The Circle is a time-honored Aboriginal research tool which we used to elicit our voice, values and vision for the future.

Causality: Cause and effect goes beyond the physical; there is an acceptance that the universe is more than the sum of its parts and that everything has an energy.

-One of the women brought to our attention that the first day of our project was International Women’s Day. This had not been planned, but in our understanding of how the universe works, this was seen as serendipity and gave us “evidence” we were travelling on the correct path.

Instrumentation: It is important to prepare the mind, body and spirit to become a vehicle of “coming to know”.

-To prepare ourselves and our environment we used traditional “instruments” such as smudge, drumming, songs, dance, and reflection.

Appropriate technology: Adopting technology is done carefully, based on need and ecological knowledge is applied to ensure harmony.

-Humans use the resources of the land to survive and thrive, and Indigenous peoples are no different. In our case though, we have a philosophy of making use of everything and to not waste, so we collected all the “scraps” from the drum making ceremony in a bag, and I was instructed to bury them to ensure we should have the necessary drum making resources in the future.

Spirit: Native science incorporates spiritual process; it is not separate from science. The Indigenous way of knowing the spirit world is better described as an understanding that all in the universe possesses an energy; every act, plant, animal, element, every natural process, etc.

-Our project paid attention and showed respect to the “spirit world” at each phase. We made space for our Ancestors, traditional “instrumentation” was used to prepare ourselves and everything we would use, gratitude was expressed even for the lessons learned from conflict. This is all felt at an experiential level, and as noted above, is the most complex element to describe for the purpose of this report.

Interpretation: Context is at the basis of Native science. It is critical to understand the circumstance within a situation.

-When we needed to understand our pain, we began a search, a search that led us on a path of discovery: of our past history, of a new relationship with one another, of a new definition of our culture and of our future.

Explanation: Native science incorporates symbols, stories, images to form an explanation.

-We explained how colonization has affected us as shown in chapters 3 (Background), 4 (Literature Review) and 7 (Discussion). It was through the use of the analogies- fleas in a jar, and crabs in a pot that we are able to connect an understanding of historical events to our current situation. These analogies, along with the sharing of the researcher’s personal story, served as the introduction to the video on lateral violence.

Authority: This is gained through the society, elders, direct experience, revelations and relationships developed over time, rather than from a social establishment.

-Although there were three facilitators, each woman felt comfortable to share her skills and knowledge with the group. We are all leaders and a collaborative atmosphere was predominant. We relied on one another, rather than look to only one authority. We were also acutely aware that we had taken the power to define ourselves and not simply accept an outside definition of who we are.

Place: The earth is sacred, and certain places hold certain energies. These can be used, but must also be protected. The role of humans is to respect and maintain order and harmony of the land.

-Nelson is where the project was held, and even though this is not the most easily accessible community in British Columbia, it held symbolic significance as our lead political organization Metis Nation British Columbia had signed the Constitution there a few years before. This represented self-governance for the Metis to acknowledge ourselves as a

Nation. Our project, like everything in life, was built on all the preceding events and hard work.

Initiation: There are pathways to the different levels of Native science. This is manifested in many different ways among the various Indigenous cultures.

-In our project, we spoke especially to the need for mentorship. It is the natural order for Elders to pass their knowledge to the next generation. Youth participate in various gatherings and events to learn this knowledge. In chapter 8- Recommendations, we note that the up-scaling of this project will give our communities an opportunity to practice this tradition.

Cosmology: The philosophy that underlies the way a people understand the origins of the universe and humans. In Native science this includes the landscape, orientation to space and time, sacred cycles of celebrations, rites, stories all serving to validate our values and way of life.

-Perhaps the greatest importance of our project was the reminder, that for us, as Indigenous people, gathering together in celebration, ceremony and work is how we make meaning in our lives. We laughed, we cried, talked, prayed, danced, sang, ate, worked, and drummed every day we were together. It felt natural, it felt right.

Representations: Formulas of thought are found recorded on stone, bark, hides, structures, etc. They are used as symbols to remember aspects of Native science.

-Although we did not go into depth with the Medicine Wheel teachings, we did use the representation in how we designed the ABCD tool by dividing the components into four categories. Even though we did not explore the four (4) directional aspects of the medicine wheel: mental, emotional, physical and spiritual they entered into our data and into our findings.

Humans: According to Native science, humans have a special role and responsibilities to the natural world because of our gifts of tool making and conscious thought.

-This theme was expressed in our project data and findings. We acknowledge our role as stewards of the land and cultural landscape to ensure benefit for generations to come.

Ceremony: Is a context for transferring knowledge and a way to remember our responsibilities. Ceremony maintains and restores balance and cultivates relationships.

-The ceremony of the Metis dance, the drum making, and even the work we did with the community development tool helped us remember, relearn, and discover our culture and to know that whenever we express our culture with pride and confidence we give that

strength to others to express their culture with pride and confidence as well, no matter what culture they are from; this is part of our responsibility. We must remember what nature teaches us: diversity is key to survival.

Elders: Carry the cultural knowledge, wisdom and experience. They are the teachers, facilitators, and guides.

-Simply stated, without our Elders, this project would not have been what it was. Our living Elders share our Ancestors teachings with their spoken word and actions.

Life energy: All things have a life force that must be understood and respected.

-As an example of this life force, it can be understood as the energy that fueled the conception, design and implementation of this project. The energy that was expressed in our history led to this project, and the energy expressed from this project will generate future events. The findings of our project had us realize that for the Metis, we also place importance on understanding and honoring the interconnectedness of all.

Dreams and visions: This is a natural means of accessing knowledge and establishing relationship to the world and holds much credibility.

-The realm of revelation holds much information for Indigenous people. As one example, on the last day of our project, after we each had opened our drum in ceremony, the overhead lights flickered. Several participants noted the event, and for myself, this event held special meaning, as the flickering of lights has for many years served as a sign that all is well in my life.

Paths: All of nature has “flight patterns” or routes. Indigenous peoples often refer to being on the correct or right path, when signs are received.

-As noted above in “causality”, Indigenous people observe signs to determine whether we are moving in the right direction. Thought to be superstition by some, this research method was revived in our project, and the women in our group paid heed to the signs that came to guide us.

What more did we learn?

In the chapter on Findings, we discovered there must be an element of trust in the process. The adage “failing to plan, is planning to fail” is as true as the adage “let go and let God”. Balancing the activities and processes that arise of these two sayings is a key element in the successful realization of goals.

We started with an idea from an observed need in our community. We designed and planned a project to meet a desired outcome of this need by determining the necessary details for implementation. However had we not been flexible enough to meet, go under,

jump above or flow through the obstacles that met us along this journey, we would not be submitting this report. As an example, at a phase when I had lost hope we would ever find the second half of the required funding, one of our ad hoc working group members called to state she had some available time and would help in researching possible sources. This led to discussions and actions in forming SMWDA resulting soon thereafter in the attainment of the required funding.

Allowing space for process was also important, and at times, this meant giving permission for participants to respond according to their interpretations. This was seen clearly in the ABCD process when one participant asked if the group was “on the right track”. I responded by saying indeed we were on the right track as we owned, controlled and lead this project.

Having a sense of ownership, and decision making power added to the strength of our circle. The women were beginning to realize this project belonged to us and as an adjunct, it was also to serve one member’s educational requirements.

The women were hand-picked and all possessed strong skills and abilities. This was a pilot project with all the enthusiasm and passion that must accompany such beginnings. This was a small group of interconnected women of mixed Aboriginal and European ancestry with an interest and commitment to the success of the project. Can this project be replicated in other Metis communities? Can it be replicated in other Indigenous communities? These simple questions require a complex answer. The integrity of the project would need to remain intact by acknowledging the need for a healing process in Aboriginal communities which would ensure the power of circle, the use of traditional healing techniques, a method to connect our history to our current environment, provision of a positive asset based community development tool and by providing a gathering that encompasses ceremony, celebration and work.

As we state in the chapter on Findings, we know each gathering, each community will respond in a unique manner, and the results may differ in each community, but this will not deter us from our up-scaling goals found in the chapter on Recommendations. If SMWDA’s mandate of helping Metis communities achieve health is met, we will consider our project model a success. Each community will be asked to provide their own indicators of health as context and subjectivity are components of Aboriginal research.

What would failure look like? Perhaps a more Aboriginal question would be, how do we know the project has lived out its life? Obstacles are placed to move process to the next phase, which eventually includes the death of the project. The death and re-birth cycle is ever present in Nature and in all our processes. Wisdom is necessary to help us see when to be tenacious and when to let go.

Our research project question, background, project objectives, genetics, literature research, findings and recommendations all wove around a circle; a circle from which we accessed our identity, ancestral knowledges, values and the strength and power to firmly accept all that the Metis were, are and meant to be. This is our dream for the project, our dream for our Nation and beyond.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As stated in chapter 5 – Methodology, the project is a living being, has an energy, and to find a place to bring this report to an end has proven difficult. It has been decided that this report will record and discuss the project from conception through to the recommendation stage.

It took about three (3) weeks for the women to bring their spirit back home. The project had a deep impact for many of the participants as reported in the testimonials that followed as it took a while to put a spiritual event into words.

Recommendations included:

- Doing the project throughout Aboriginal communities in BC starting with the participants' communities.

- Spacing the project components to allow time for processing (the two and one half (2.5) day event was too intense).

- Keep the integrity of the project components and add a session on history. Although there was no formal history review during the project itself, its importance came evident.

- When working with groups of women, it was recommended that more formal break times be established as women tend to keep working.

The following is a skeleton project proposal developed by the participants for the up-scaling of the project. Specific details are still required, and will be determined through the community survey that our Elders are being asked to complete. Many of the sessions will occur at the local community level then culminate into a larger regional gathering.

History Sessions: Although a formal history session was not an original component of the project, it was decided it would be a valuable adjunct to the larger up-scale project. Through the community survey we will decide on who and how we will deliver the timeline of Aboriginal history. We have decided it will lead the remainder of the project components. On-going discussions will be encouraged by the project participants in their respective communities.

Community Level: a chosen history session facilitator will deliver the gathering. Further, on-going community discussions will be encouraged.

Lateral Violence Sessions: the current project participant women will lead discussions in their respective communities.

Community Level: SMWDA would apply for funding (as part of a larger proposal) to purchase the Lateral Violence DVD (Bearpaw Media Productions, 2006) to distribute to the communities that were represented by the BC Metis Women Healing and Community

Development Project. Each willing leader would get a DVD to start discussions in her respective community. If any woman leader cannot, or prefers to have another facilitator to accompany the showing and discussion of the DVD, this would be accounted for in the grant proposal writing and will also include rental space, food, honorarium for leader(s), and travel.

Regional Level: After communities have had time to be introduced to the concept of lateral violence, SMWDA would then offer regional level workshops conducted by the Kweykway group. These women have created workshops on lateral violence and come highly rated for engaging and enlightening presentations. As an example, each region would organize two (2) or three (3) of these workshops.

Drum making sessions: The drumming workshop holds its value in reviving our First Nations traditions, reminding us how important ceremony is, especially as Aboriginal people and offers us a healing technique that resonates with our soul.

Community Level: Each community would hold drum making gatherings. If drum making facilitators live in the community, they would be commissioned to do the ceremony. If not, SMWDA will make a list of the current drum making facilitators in the three regions, and they could be called upon to facilitate the gatherings. Decisions will be made on the number of gatherings in each community, the supply list and costs, space rental, food, honorarium for drum facilitators and leader(s).

Metis Dancing Sessions: Metis music and dance feeds the soul, helps keep the body fit and is a great social event; it is an important overall healing technique.

Community Level: Each community will hold Metis dance events with the help of our Metis dance instructors. A list of local dancers will be created by SMWDA. Because the Asham Stompers are very skilled at creating the “Metis Kitchen Party” atmosphere, have the ability to teach a variety of jig steps and provide live music we would bring this group to each community in the three regions along with our local Metis dance instructors. Some communities may also have fiddlers that could join in. Costs will include the Asham Stompers, honorarium for local dance instructors, fiddlers, leader(s), space rental, food, and cost of purchasing wooden spoons.

Regional Level: Several months later, we would plan a “provincial” gathering bringing the communities together in a central location. The Asham Stompers would be invited, dance instructors, fiddlers, and all our drummers. The drum would open and close the event. Workshops would be held during the day (such as drum bag making, drum decorating, dance instruction, etc.). This would serve as a celebration of healing and connectedness.

Community Economic Development Sessions: The Asset Based Community Development tool would be applied to communities with a focus on community and economic

development. This tool is best suited to a geographic community, although we have proved it can be used in helping a cultural community generate some interesting ideas. This would be the last piece of the total Healing and Community Development proposal.

It will be offered from the Train the Trainer focus again. In training many facilitators in the ABCD process we can show potential funders this will be a cost effective process and from an Aboriginal position, we can increase the potential for community connections. Details to consider will be how many regional events we will need to have, the timing, location and number of participants per session along with costs.

It is expected this process will take two (2) years to complete. This will allow for space and processing time and provide our communities the skills to remember our Indigenous roots of combining ceremony, celebration and work into our daily routines.

CONCLUSION

In Aboriginal philosophy, stories are offered to the listener with an understanding the receiver is to come to her/his own conclusion. This report has two (2) purposes: firstly it serves as a summarization of the gathered data from the community based BC Metis Women Healing and Community Development Project for the participants themselves, and secondly, it serves as the educational requirements for the researcher. So this concluding chapter will address the overall finding of the project as the Power of Circle.

On the advice of my Metis mentor, Ms. Donna Wright, I read *Circle Works*, a research case by Fyre Jean Graveline (1998). Does Circle work? According to Graveline, the Aboriginal Circle, which her teaching model is based upon, is a traditional research tool that is relevant and useable in our current times (p. 287). Although her research focus came from her role as educator in Western institutions, nonetheless, her research has validity to our project. She is an Aboriginal researcher, used the Circle in her work with a decolonizing intent as did our project. Graveline wants to show that it is possible for educators to “resist acculturation” by “redefining and enacting alternative curricula and pedagogies” (p. 12). Our project as well wants to show that by addressing and naming our history and its effects, by accepting our culture in its entirety, by practicing the Power of Circle we can heal and own our rightful place in society.

The Circle is a tool that has been used for millennia by Aboriginal groups for “decision making, conflict resolution or healing” (p. 131) and in its physical form has people sit in a circle formation, equidistant to the centre “which is both empty and full of everything” (p. 130). Devoid of a hierarchal structure, this formation allows each member to be equal. The Aboriginal belief that underlies Circle Work is that a web will form between people to serve as a reminder of our interconnectedness (p. 131). Although not explicitly expressed throughout our project, Graveline informs us of the basic rules of conduct while in Circle: one person talks at a time (hence the circulation of a symbolic object is often used), speak carefully, respectfully and from the heart and only speak to what you know. This helps to mitigate directed criticisms and also serves to create a distinct speaker and listener, which offers the space and time required for more complete communication (pp. 120-135).

In retrospect, in regards to our project, the viewing of the lateral violence video did not allow for enough discussion time, nor did we form a physical circle. We also realized that this video should precede the entire gathering as it sets the stage for the decolonizing focus of our healing and community development project. These were good lessons learned.

According to Blaut (1993) as cited by Graveline, decolonization requires firstly a resurgence of a group’s history with connections made to how the group fits into the world, and secondly we must reframe colonial history; we must tell the story from our point of view. The outcome of colonization only benefitted one group and by its nature,

requires other groups to be powerless; this story must be told (p. 37). Our project recommendations (chapter 8) contain this element as it was suggested by the participants we start our up-scaling project with history sessions which will flow into the lateral violence component. Beyond this, it is our history that laid the foundations for our project in the first place. Where we have come from has lead us to where we are today, and will lead us into the future.

To aid in understanding the importance of Circle Work for Aboriginals, I will add Graveline's Aboriginal Traditional Foundations/worldview which includes the following constructs. Although presented in a linear fashion, each component is interrelated and interconnected as per the foundation of the belief system.

- 1) Immanence relates to the respect for all life forms. Graveline goes on to say, that this extends to the "respect for unseen powers" (p. 52). The material and non-material world is made of energy, and all energy is to be respected. Moreover, Graveline explains, "...knowledge without acknowledgment of the spiritual core, the moral code, is a very dangerous thing (Forbes, 1979)" (p. 130). In fact, our Elders teach us that this spiritual connectedness/interconnectedness "...has been one of our greatest weapons, healers, liberators..." (p. 130).
- 2) Balance: The Medicine Wheel is used to encourage a balanced life which is considered a sacred act. The four (4) elements of the Medicine Wheel: air, light (fire), water and earth combine with the four (4) aspects of human life: mental, physical, emotional and spiritual, and are weaved through the individual, family, community and Mother Earth components to produce the ultimate goal of harmony (p. 54).
- 3) Interconnectedness: "All things are dependent on each other" and all "thrive when there is a web of interconnectedness" (p. 55). We do nothing separate from everything else; "together we form a circle" (p. 56). The Circle builds community and reciprocity both of which are held in high regard by Aboriginals (p. 164).
- 4) Self- in- Relation: "The knowledge that each person is responsible for his or her actions In-Relation to the larger community is a fundamental shared belief "(p. 57). Not only do we express our identity of who we are at the individual level, but also at the family, community and Nation level.

The Aboriginal value system of circular connectedness and relatedness, with a harmonious cooperation goal is in sharp contrast to the Western, dominant, or as Graveline names, Eurocentric value system of individualism, division, and inequality. Graveline uses the adage of "divide and conquer" to represent the Eurocentric value system in contrast to "unite and nurture" as representative of the Aboriginal system (p. 50). She cites Collins (1991) to state Eurocentric values come from a market model based on competition and domination (p. 163) and warns us through the work of Fulani (1998) that building community is seen as a threat to the Eurocentric system. We must be aware the Circle work we do will undoubtedly cause discomfort and even be perceived

as a threat by some, but as stated by Graveline “The deconstruction of community has led to an escalation of individual isolation, hopelessness and despair” (p. 163). This is reason enough to continue working with the Power of Circle. Also if we believe in our Traditional Foundations as Graveline has described, we understand that there is no “us against them”, rather, we are all connected. Graveline clarifies our responsibility to see our role, as it is critical to the change process. As an example, the dichotomy of oppressor and the oppressed is based on uneven distribution of power (p. 113). It is important to understand the political, social and economic forces in our society, and it is equally important to understand our own power in relation to these forces and how we can manifest this power into positive, collaborative, collectively responsible transformation (Kovach, 2009).

As our project focus was based on healing, we already had a sense that our culture and communities were experiencing pain, even though at project conception, we did not understand the pain was connected to our colonized history. We also demonstrated the Aboriginal Foundations in adding our desire for community development. We were not sure what this should look like, but we instinctively knew the interrelatedness concept revealed through an old Aboriginal tenant “When the women heal, the family heals. When the family heals, the Nations heal” (Kenny, C., Faries, E., Fiske, J., Voyageur, C., 2004, p.1).

Graveline goes onto to tell us our Elders describe Four (4) Laws of Community. They are Respect, Honesty, Caring and Sharing (p. 162) and these concepts were clearly defined in our project data gathering process and findings. Graveline shares the Elders teachings that the process of colonization has led to our current social breakdown (p. 162). Some may argue in denial of Metis social breakdown, but our Elders tell us we have a repeated pattern of enthusiastic starts with ensuing conflict, inability to effectively deal with this conflict leading to eventual organizational or community demise. It is the Power of Circle; the community that is built through the process of circle that will strengthen us and lead us on the correct path. “Coming together in a Circle, caring for each other, sharing with each other, helping each other gain a better understanding of our cultural locatedness... [is] ...necessary for the transformation of today’s society” (p. 162). When transforming society, we must remember change will trigger a grief response; new beginnings also represent loss of the old order. Graveline discusses the emotions expressed in her research project as anger, shame, guilt, fear, resistance, and denial. She reminds us that laughter and tears are gifts, as expressed by our own Elder, Ms. Donna Wright during the course of our project. We need not fear or resist any of our emotions, rather we are to embrace them as gifts of the Creator.

This brings us to the last phase of our project where the question “where should we go next?” was asked of the participants. What is our vision of the future? Graveline tells us we can access visions through several means: silence, imagination, day-dreaming, fasting and spiritual guidance. Visioning aligns us to our past, present and future and is often expressed in relation to family and community (p. 281) and our chapter on

recommendations most certainly embodies Graveline's account. We will provide history sessions, decolonizing explanation of lateral violence, inclusive healing gatherings using traditional techniques, and then an asset based community development tool that will lead our Nation to envision and plan for a positive, healthy future.

Is this model without problems? Not at all. We recognize the pilot project participants were hand-picked because of their long term community leadership, their pre-existing relations to others in the group, their honored role in community and their high level of social functioning, among other assets. We also recognize the Metis community has varying understandings of the effects of colonization and varying levels of openness to new concepts. We realize to bring about change will elicit the grief response with ensuing emotions that must be acknowledged and accepted. Creating a culture of two (2) opposing cultures requires innovation, but the dichotomy is not fully resolved. We especially know we do not operate in isolation; everything is related including our social, political and economic facets and we must prepare ourselves in relation to the differences of opinions and subsequent actions others may take in reaction to our objectives and goals. Nature teaches us that diversity is the key to survival, and it is our hope that our healing and community development model provides enough flexibility to allow this diversity, while still maintaining its integrity as a model of transformation.

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APPENDIX A

How does a Healing and Community Development project begin? Well, it first began with acknowledging there was such pain in our culture and communities; a pain that seemed much deeper than just “personality conflicts”. A pain that we started calling Ancestral Pain. We also knew there was much need for community development as well, and that this ancestral pain often got in the way of working well and productively together. After my own personal experience working in my Metis community and experiencing this ancestral pain first-hand, having several discussions with Donna Wright and others, I decided to pursue my education when I stumbled across the online UVic Masters in Community Development program. Looking back, I can see there are no accidents, no mistakes. All these pieces fell into place as we needed them. Hence, the BC Metis Women Healing and Community Development project was conceived.

How did we include the drum? It wasn't easy. Some Metis claimed the drum “wasn't Metis”; it was First Nations. This brought the question “What is Metis?” to the surface. Are we not a culture that is a mixture of our First Nations and European ancestors? Is it any less Metis to drum than to jig, a dance that we learned from our European family? We managed to blend, mix and weave our two parent cultures (religion, clothing, dance, music, language, technologies) into a unique Metis culture that is still evolving today, because fortunately, we were able to survive the difficult moments of our history.

The enclosed pictures show the evolution of the drum from its basic elements of wood and animal hide to the transformation of the drum that is used in our healing and celebratory ceremonies.

We honour and give thanks to all our relations (our Ancestors, the four legged, the plants, the water, the tools, each other) that helped us create our drums.

The Aboriginal scientific model (Brant Castelleno, 2000) that I mention in the section on Metis music and dance can be used to explain how we, as Aboriginal people, find meaning and the process of how we learn through:

- stories,
- empirical observations rather than experiments separated from the whole, and
- revelations

This model helps us to understand how this project was experienced as so powerful by those of us in the project. We shared our stories as Aboriginal peoples, we experienced

the workshop fully by making a drum from its basic elements, we were then able to drum the following day, we learned our songs, and in the opening of our drums ceremony, when the lights flickered, many of us spoke to our Ancestors being present and honouring our process. Our tears expressed how important the drum making ceremony was to us that are of mixed cultures, to finally be able to express our “First Nations” traditions. We had been kept away from many of these traditions as they were outlawed and we were shamed into practicing primarily our European traditions.



APPENDIX B

Louis Riel has been quoted to state: “My people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake, it will be the artists who will give them their spirit back” (Manitoba Metis Federation, 2010). This seems to have come true, as there is a revival of the traditional dance and music in many of our Metis communities. We decided to include the music and dance in our program and Sherry Arko led the group in learning the basic Metis jig step. Metis music CDs and the Asham Stompers CD was available to facilitate hearing the music style and watching the dance styles of the Metis Jig step.

“...the spirit to dance was firmly ingrained in the Metis from their Native, Scottish and French ancestry. Their most famous dance, called the “Red River jig,” included elements of Native dancing as well as the jigs and reels of the French and Scots” (Harrison, 1985). This quote from the book entitled *Metis: People between two worlds* by Julia D. Harrison gives an historical description of the Metis style dance.

The Asham Stomper’s knowledge of the origin of the dance was shared: this particular jig step was designed to attract Voyageurs canoeing past the fort (which is now Winnipeg, MB) as it was financially beneficial to encourage trade at the fort. This could be called an early tourism plan! In time, the dance style was modified due to the government of the day outlawing Aboriginal dance. In an attempt to hide the fact they were dancing, the Metis developed a rather stiff upper body with most dance movement occurring in the legs to prevent detection by any government officials that might be looking through windows.

It was my impression that most of the women from the project enjoyed the dancing and music portion of the program and could link it to community healing as it brings great and fun-filled energy to the whole group, even for those who chose to sit down at times. I am sure there are any number of dominant society research papers that would explain how music and dance effect healing, but from an Aboriginal scientific model (Brant Castelleno, 2000) that includes:

- stories,
- empirical observations rather than experiments separated from the whole, and
- revelations

we were able to discover for ourselves how important our music, dance and songs, our ceremonies, our celebrations with community, our relationships to one another, is to our health as Aboriginal peoples.

APPENDIX C

Aboriginal Lateral Violence

The introduction to the lateral violence video was offered by pinning up three (3) flip chart papers on the wall with the following information below. Also, the facilitator began by sharing her own story of perpetration and victimization in regards to Aboriginal lateral violence. Two analogies used were:

- 1) Fleas in the jar: Place fleas in a sealed jar, slam it on the table repeatedly when the fleas try to make an attempt for freedom, and over time, the fleas will simply cower at the bottom of the jar due to fear of moving and making an effort to get free. This then flows into the,
- 2) The crabs in the pot: Place crabs in a pot, when one tries to get out, the others pull it down. This is due to fear of what will happen to the whole (see fleas in a jar analogy), if one crab tries to find freedom. However, the Aboriginal community is ready to rewrite this analogy and encourage its climbing crabs to get out of the pot, and then the free crab is to reach back down the pot, to bring the others up and out.

The answer to the following questions (on flip chart paper) were answered by the video Lateral Violence (Bearpaw Media Productions, 2006) that was viewed by all participants. Not much time was spent exploring the concept of lateral violence, rather the video served as an introduction.

-What is it?

Lateral violence is a worldwide occurrence, however Aboriginal Lateral Violence specifically describes how and why there is violence between Aboriginal peoples; we have become our own oppressor. It is a cycle of abuse which insidiously inhabits our communities. Insidious, because for the most part, many people diagnose the violence at an individual level because we are unaware of its systemic basis (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2012).

-What are the behaviours?

See the list below "Some Lateral Violence Behaviours" (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2012).

-Why does it happen?

See “Roots of Lateral Violence” below. “Colonization may be used as a method of absorbing and assimilating foreign peoples into the culture of the imperial country, and thus destroying any remnant of the foreign cultures that might threaten the imperial territory over the long term by inspiring rebellion” (Wikipedia, Riel Rebellions, n.d.)

In their article, *Aboriginal Lateral Violence*, The Native Women’s Association of Canada explains that lateral violence occurs because of suppressed feelings of anger, shame and rage. It is these repressed feelings that lead to the lateral violence behaviours expressed in our communities (p. 3).

-Anyone can be a target or perpetrator (Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2012).

No one is immune. The key is to become aware of the concept of lateral violence; name it, understand its roots. This will aid in moving the behaviours from the individuals and place it on the systemic cause. The next step is in realizing we are more than our history; we can move beyond the shackles of violence.

Roots of Lateral Violence

- colonization
- oppression
- intergenerational trauma
- ongoing racism and prejudice

Some Lateral Violence Behaviours

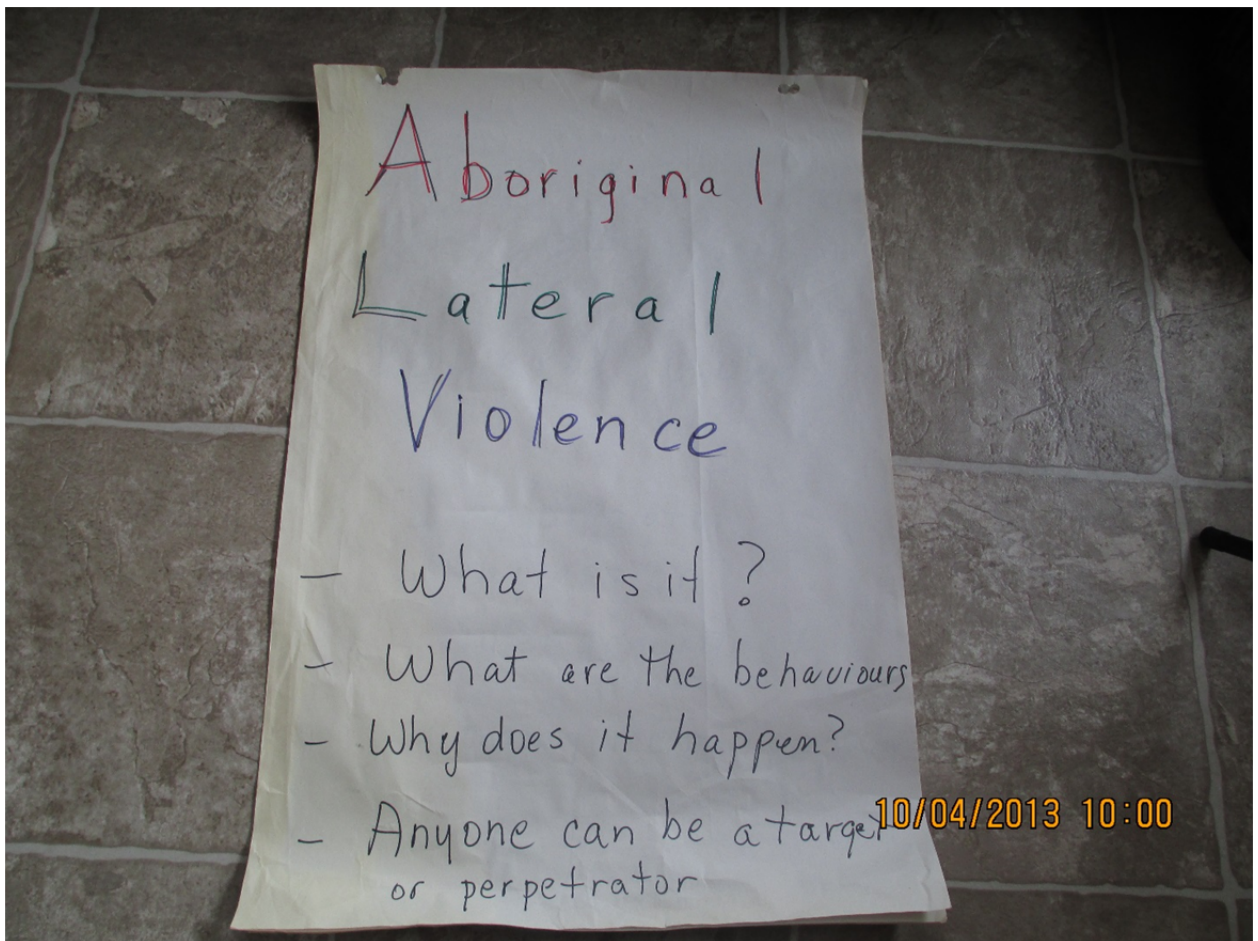
- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| -shaming | -infighting |
| -gossiping | -scapegoating |
| -sarcasm | -back stabbing |
| -jealously | -physical violence |
| -social exclusion | -name calling |
| -sabotage | -whining |
| -withholding of information | -infighting |

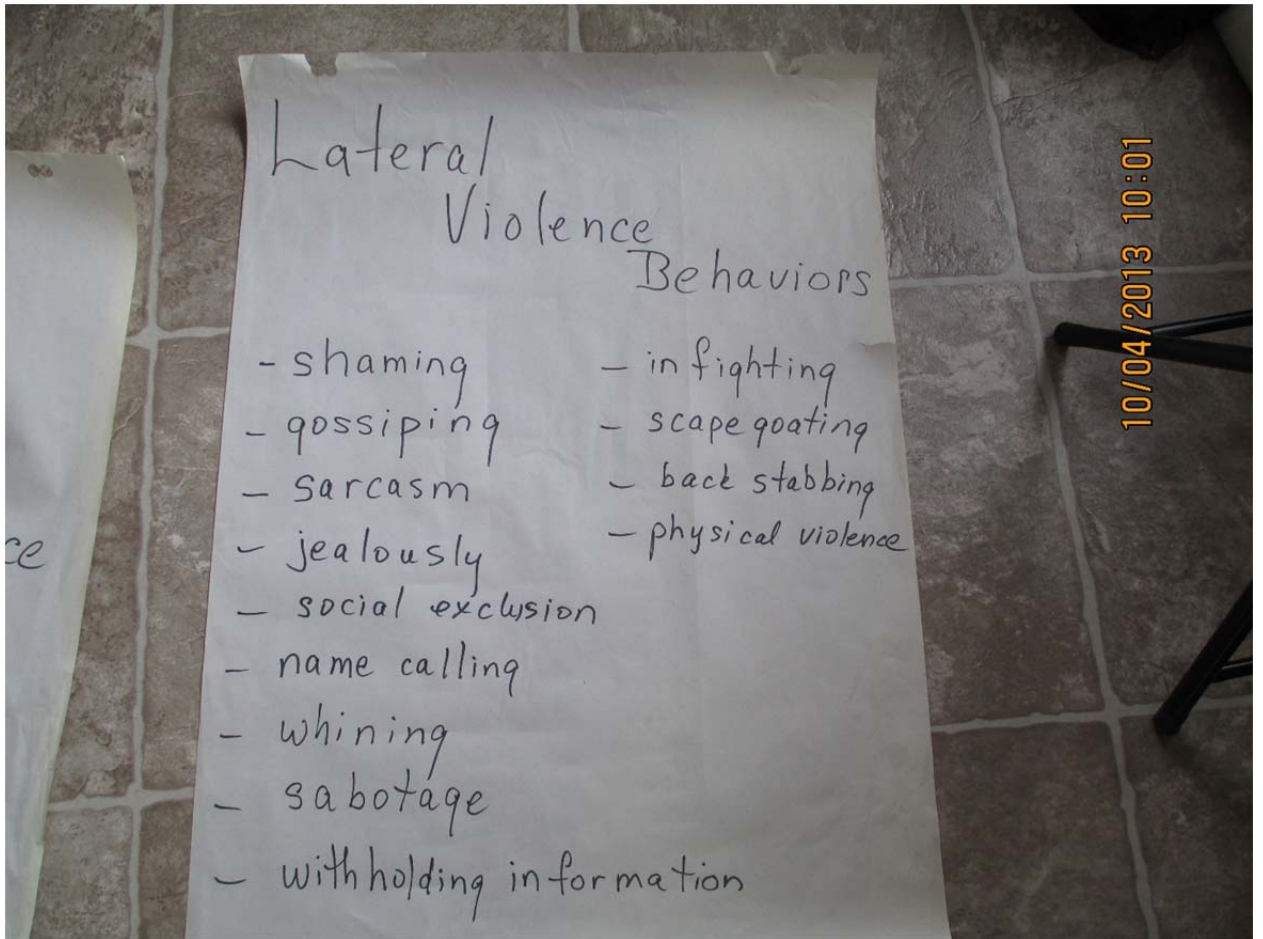
Antidotes to Lateral Violence

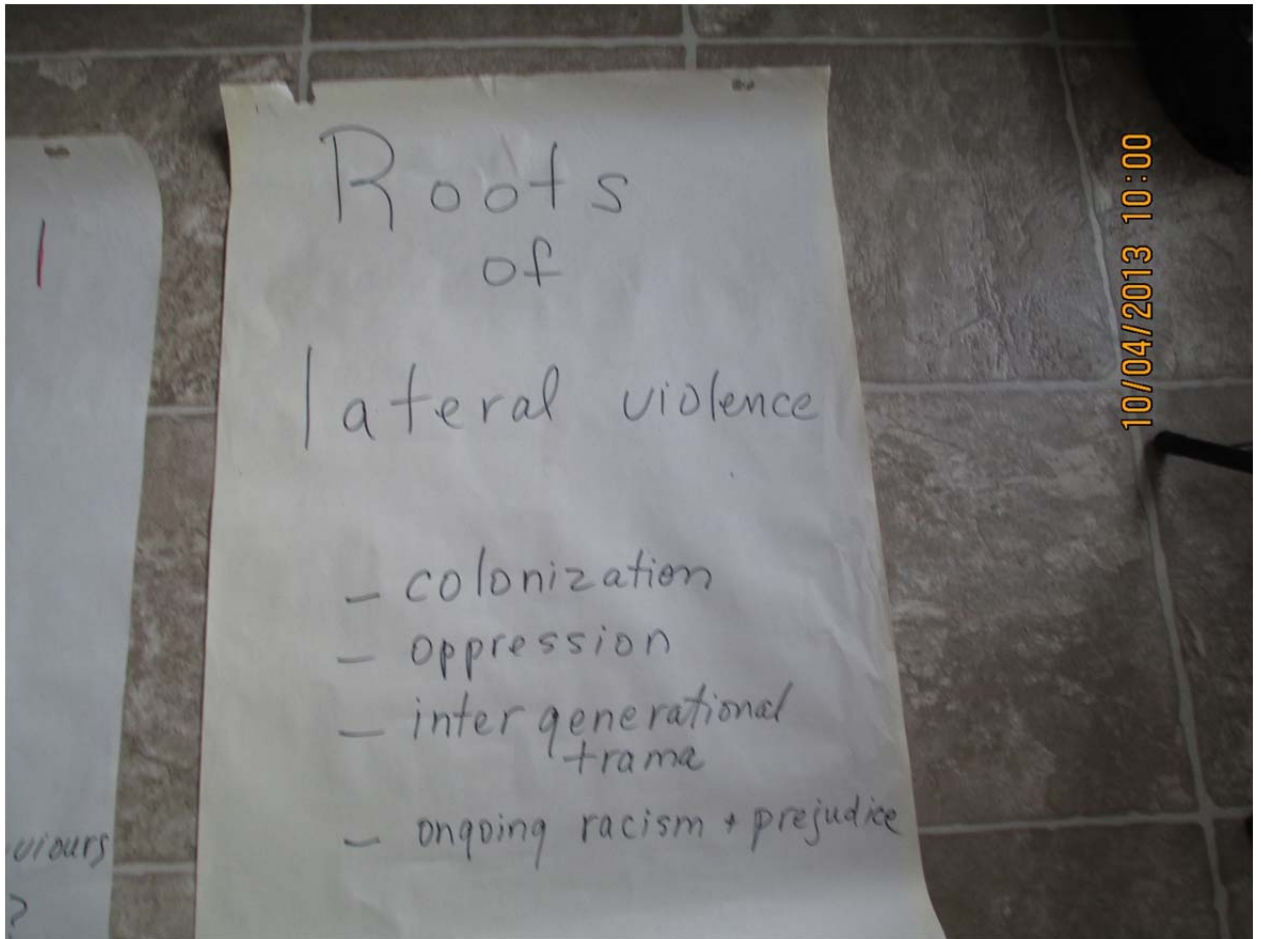
We did not have the chance to explore Lateral Violence well, and therefore did not explore methods to counterbalance the effects, but a BC coast called Kweykway Consulting group (Kweykway Consulting, n.d.) offer seven (7) techniques:

- 1- Increase positivity
- 2- Reduce toxins- blame, contempt, stonewalling, complaints, gossip
- 3- Self-awareness and awareness of others
- 4- Direct and positive communication
- 5- Carry power consciously and own it
- 6- Develop role flexibility
- 7- Develop ability to respond positively to triggers; listen to your body.

This group has been added to the list of resources.







APPENDIX D

Asset Based Community Development

A thirty-five (35) page handout on the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) tool was given to each participant of the BC Metis Women Healing and Community Development Project. The focus of the pilot project was Train the Trainer, therefore a handout was designed by the facilitator to provide written information to be used as a reference by participants when they present such a session in their own community. Credit was given to McKnight and Kretzmann (1993) from the USA as founders of this community based participatory style of community development and research. This handout offered an introduction, philosophy of ABCD, explanation of the components, tools such as the Leaky Bucket and Conversation Cafes, implications of ABCD, an overview of project management using planning, monitoring and evaluation, how to account for unplanned outcomes and changes, a definition of lateral violence, symptoms and antidotes. The participants were explained that all asset created maps are brought together at the end, perhaps in an exercise such as a Conversation Café, to help the working group come up with opportunities for the community. It was also explained that our society has spent much time, effort and money “fighting” problems. This process of discovering and mapping our assets and then developing opportunity from those assets is a more life giving, positive approach to community development. Discussions were had in terms of the disbursement of energy; many understood that whatever our energy is focused on, that is what is perpetuated.

Three (3) flip chart papers were pinned on the wall.

1) Definitions:

Definition of Asset- “a useful or valuable quality, person or thing. An advantage; a resource. From accounting= entire property owned by a person or business (The Free Dictionary, Asset, n.d.).

Definition of Economy-“freedom from waste in the use of anything; thrift. The regulation and management of the resources of a group” (The Winston Canadian Dictionary for Schools, 1964).

2) A flip chart paper was decorated to depict ABCD from an Aboriginal perspective:

Asset- a tipi was used to form the letter “A”

Based- a set of mittens, one on top of one another, formed the letter “B”

Community- an almost formed Medicine Wheel formed the letter “C”

Development- an Igloo on its side formed the letter “D”

3) The components of discovery from the Asset Based Community Development process were divided into four (4) categories to fit into a medicine wheel formation. There was not enough time to explore the medicine wheel teachings in

this pilot project, but subsequent sessions held in communities could spend much time exploring each ABCD component in harmony with the these teachings. In an article by Carrie Langevin (2011), the medicine wheel is described as a symbol representing balance and connection. Stone medicine wheels have been found throughout the North American prairies, but many Aboriginal cultures have since adopted this ancient method of learning.

Our four categories were as follows:

- a. Human Resources- was titled “Who are we?” and rested in the NE (northeast) quadrant.
- b. Associations and Institutions- was titled “How do we gather?” and was placed in the SE (southeast) quadrant.
- c. Natural and Physical Resources- titled “What’s our Geography?” was located in the SW (southwest) quadrant.
- d. Economy- titled “How do we live?” was positioned in the NW (northwest) quadrant.





APPENDIX E

Who Are We? (Human Resource component of ABCD)

The facilitator explained, this exercise helps a community map who is in the community and what they can do. The process can be facilitated in different manners. The working group can start by making a list of the people in the room, or people in the community. It can be added to at any time; it is a component in constant flux as people come in or leave the community. People can be added beyond any geographical community as well. Three (3) visual cues we offered to give the working group an idea of mapping people's skills, qualities, abilities, etc. These cues were derived from an exercise from the Indigenous Women in Community Leadership program at Coady International Institute at St Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. The visual cues ask to define people using gifts of the 1) heart, 2) hands and 3) head.

The participants decided to map their own group. The first two names on the board received information such as "gifts of the mind" or "gifts of the heart", but it did not take long before the women started to add specific details of what they saw in the person. It became a process of gift giving and receiving. The list is as follows:

Cindy: gift of mind, gift of hands.

Sherry: gift of mind (x2), gift of heart

Joan: hands on

Gail: gentle spirit, very generous

Suzanne: so much heart

Carmelle: commitment and compassion

Claudia: strength and generous

Rose: inspiring and strength, commitment and graceful

Anne-Marie: determined, inner strength, very sharing, spirit enhance, amazing power through art work

Ev: gumption and trickster, inspiration, free spirit ☺

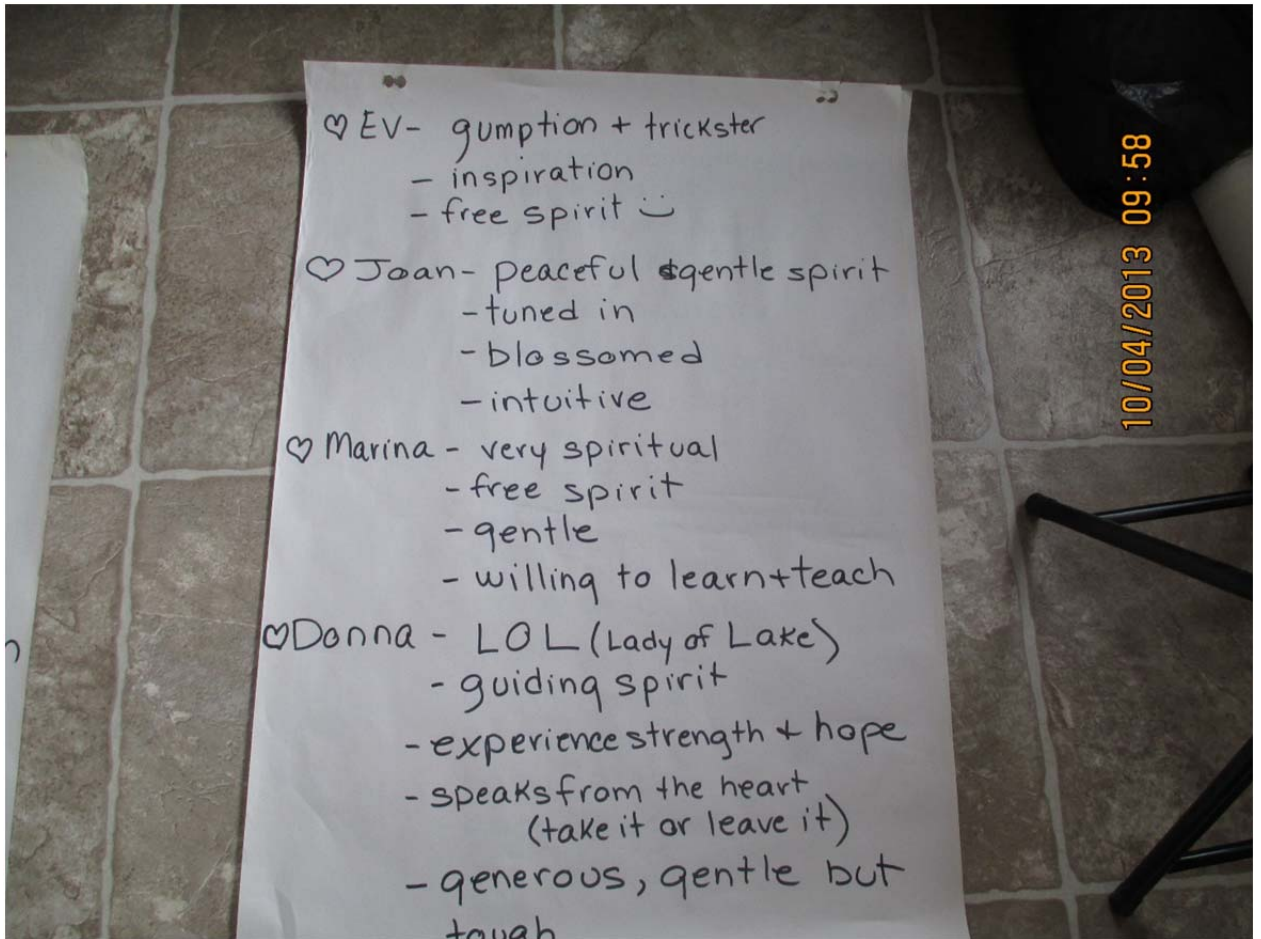
Joan: peaceful, gently spirit, tuned in, blossomed, intuitive

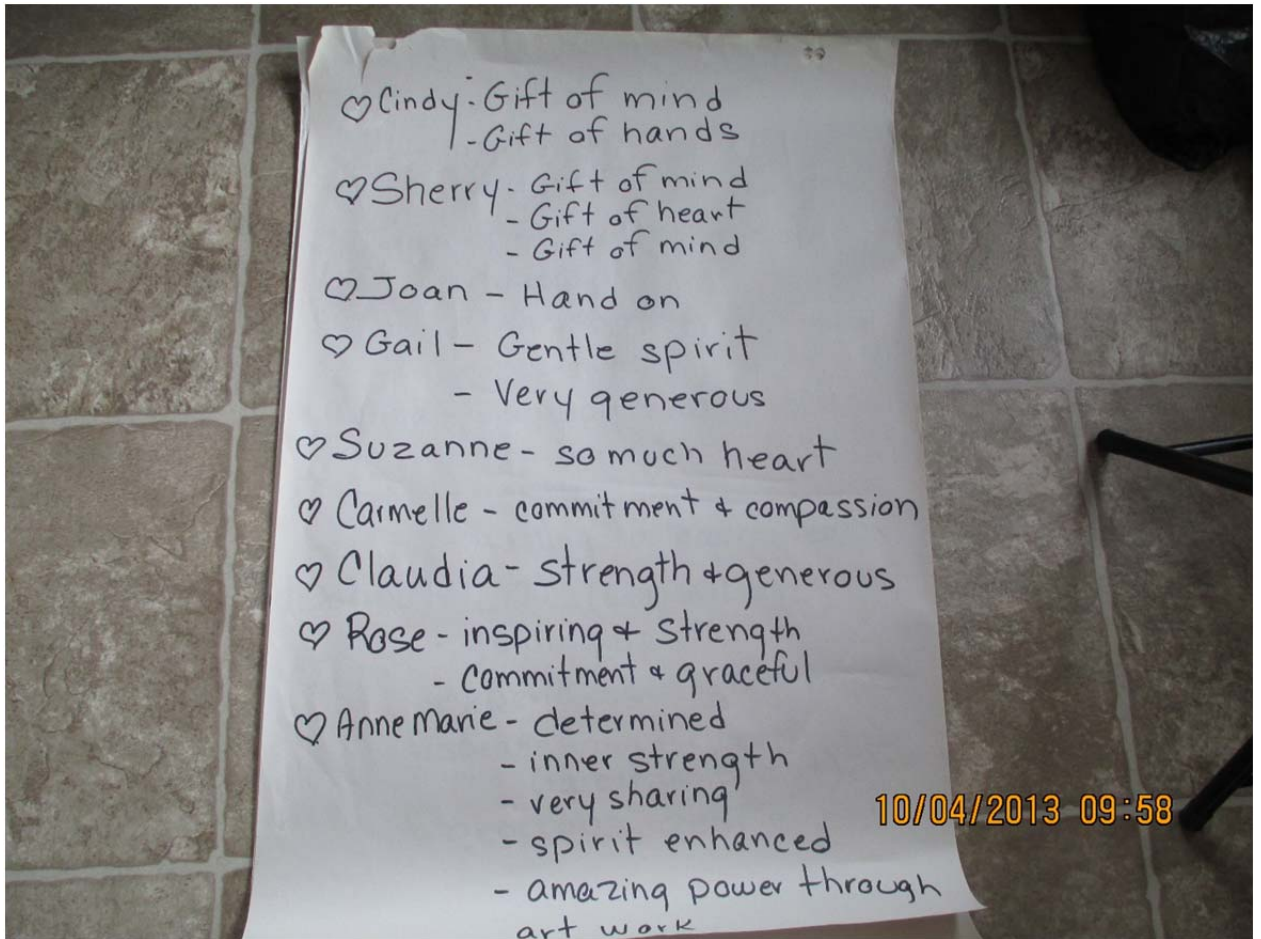
Marina: very spiritual, free spirit, gentle, willing to learn and teach

Donna: LOL (Lady of the Lake), guiding spirit, experience strength and hope, speaks from the heart (take it or leave it), generous, gentle but tough

Karen: incredible nurturer (Mother), gentle spirit, amazing humour, smart lady, coyote medicine, deep to the core, her own person

Denise: passionate, "Weebles wobble but they don't fall down", energizer bunny, truth saying, compassionate, generous, optimistic, good jigger.





♡ Karen - incredible nurturer (mother)
- gentle spirit
- amazing humour
- smart lady
- Coyote medicine
- deep to the core
- her own person

♡ Denise - Passionate
- weeble wobble they
don't fall down
- energizer bunny
- truth saying
- compassionate
- generous
- optimistic
- good jigger

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APPENDIX F

How Do We Gather? (Associations and Institutions component of ABCD)

This component of the ABCD was explained by the facilitator. Giving each ABCD component an Aboriginal title may have helped give rise to our unique interpretation. As well, the Metis seem to recognize themselves as a cultural community more so than a geographic community, at least this seems to be the case in British Columbia. The group was asked to write or draw their impressions of how we gather, on flip chart paper along with coloured markers placed on the working table that the participants sat around.

The following is a list of the words and an attempt to describe the symbols:

- 1) Words: get-togethers, strength, inspiration, kindness, laughter, ha- ha- ha, connection, ancestors, light, family and friends, friends, youth, culture events, recognizing our culture, The Creator, for the beauty of our country, my family that are proud of who they are.
Symbols: There are pictures of stick people in family formations, dove of peace, Metis infinity symbol, Metis sash, fiddle and bow, hearts, and one symbol that is not clearly identified. A picture of the paper will follow.
- 2) Words: Friends, music, dance, teachings from Elders, pot lucks, picnics, language, 2013-community involvement now-working together finally-baby steps-erasing the hurt-
Symbols: (a heart followed “erasing the hurt”), picture of hands.
- 3) Words: the drum- because it brings us together and provides healing and connection, Elders presence in our circles, all people are accepted into our circles and gatherings, that the men in our group feel safe and honoured and they share their stories and wisdom, the drumming and learning songs together is amazing- heartfelt and connectedness happens!, the intimacy-trust-safety of being together-sharing our stories and of the teachings brought forward, that we want to learn more, mentoring and trust- youth can do it!!, that Metis are being accepted- recognized and honoured more, Claudia-Kris-Joan-Joannie-Sherry-Ann Marie-Marina- oh I have more family and community!!!, Metis are recognizing their 1st Nation side, our community is in turmoil so we are going to start a new community; I’ve got a good feeling- remember us in your prayers-God bless us all, 1-being connected with other Elders-2-opportunities to connect and participate with youth and children through the schools and community- 3- my husband! and my family-4- for being a woman -5- my heritage and all the things I have yet to learn.
Symbols: five (5) petal flowers, heart with arrow through it, medicine wheel, music symbol, Metis infinity and flag, feather.
- 4) Words: jiggling, love, laughter, tears of joy, ceremonies, understandings, respect, drumming- smudging- prayer, We are grateful for our community: UNITY (coming

together), GROWTH, SHARE STORIES, BUILDING A FUTURE FOR OUR CHILDREN, TENDER ELDER TEACHINGS, SUPPORTS AND MENTORING, TEACHING FROM OUR CHILDREN.

Symbols: Metis infinity and heart.



FRIENDS

- music
- dance
- teachings from Elders

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POTLUCKS
PICNICS
Language

2013
|
COMMUNITY involvement
Now
|
Working Together
finally
|
Baby STEPS
|
EARSING the heart
♡

That we want to hear more of

Mentoring at trust + youth can do it!!!

Metis are recognizing their 1st nation side

Metis are recognized and honored

That Metis are being recognized and honored

Some KPIs
 - I have more family + community
 - I have more family + community
 - I have more family + community

Some things I am proud of
 - I have more family + community
 - I have more family + community
 - I have more family + community

Being connected with other Elders
 1. Opportunities to participate with youth in schools + comm.
 2. My husband + I, my family through the schools + comm.
 3. My heritage and all the things I learn
 4. My husband + I, my family through the schools + comm.
 5. My heritage and all the things I learn

Elders presence in our circles

The drum because it brings us together + provides healing + connection

All people are accepted into our circles + gatherings

That the metis in our group feel safe + honored - they share their stories + wisdom

The intimacy of trust, safety + connection happens

The intimacy of trust, safety + connection happens

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APPENDIX G

What is our geography? (Natural and Physical Resources component of ABCD)

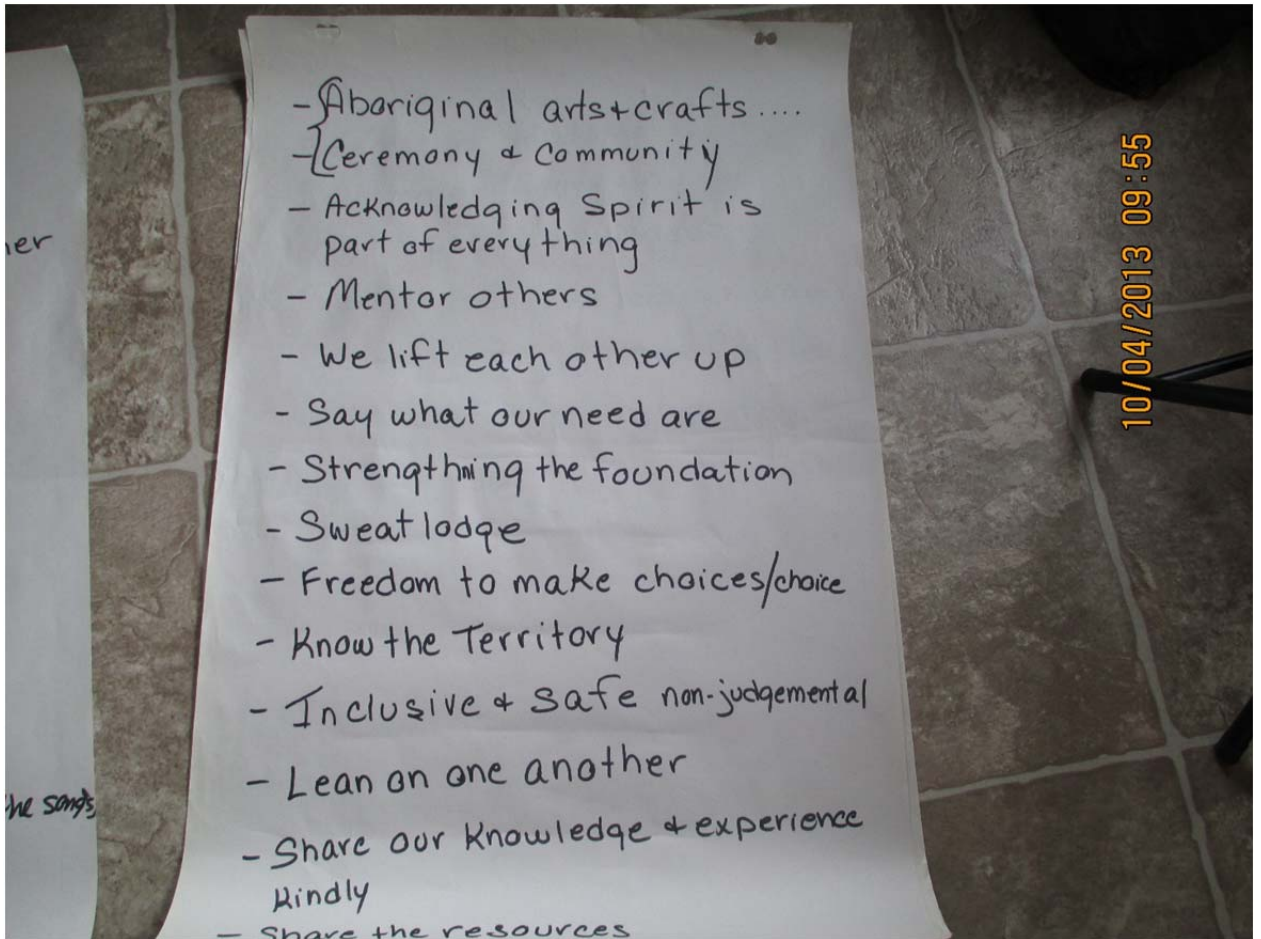
This component was explained as mapping our natural and physical resources. The group started by stating air, land, water, then quickly made it their own. The list is as follows:

- The goal is to be “happy”
- Eco-tourism
- Connect to and sustain the air land and water
- Full wheel deal
- “Elders run amuck”
- Elders are a source to help us evolve
- Elders as landscape
- Each other for support
- Gift making circle
- Pain shared is cut in half and joy shared is doubled
- Storytelling
- Embrace one another
- Connection
- Don’t give up on each other
- Listening
- Being present
- Give time to be heard
- Respect and Honour (choice)
- Value
- Acknowledging
- Honour the drum (use only in ceremony, acknowledge the history of the song)
- Betterment of all
- Accommodate
- Aboriginal arts and crafts, ceremony and community)

- Mentor others
- We lift each other up
- Say what our needs are
- Strengthen the foundation
- Sweatlodge (respect each lodge)
- Freedom to make choices
- Know the Territory
- Inclusive and safe, non-judgemental
- Lean on one another
- Share our knowledge and experience kindly
- Share the resources
- Gift economy
- Essence of relationship
- Drumming and Smudging
- Give space to witness
- Dance, song, jigging and fiddle
- Walk barefoot on the Earth
- Ha, Ha, Ha

- Air
- Land
- Water
- The goal is to be "happy"
- Eco tourism
- Connect to + sustain ~~to~~ the ^{air}land _{water}
- Full wheel deal
- "Elders run a muk"
- Elders as a resource to help us evolve
- Elders as landscape
- Each other for support
- Gift making circle
- Pain shared is cut in half
and joyed shared is doubled.

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- Story telling
- Embrace one another
- Connection
- Don't give up on each other
- Listening
- Being present
- Give time to be heard
- Respect + Honour
(choice)
- Value
- Acknowledging
- Honor the drum
(use only in ceremony)
(acknowledge the history of the songs)
- Betterment of all
- Accomodate

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- Gift economy
- Essence of relationship
- Drumming & Smudging
- Give space to witness
- Sweat lodge (Respect each lodge)
- Dance, song, jigging & fiddle
- Walk barefeet on the earth.
- Ha Ha Ha

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APPENDIX H

Leaky Bucket

An explanation was offered on how the Leaky Bucket exercise is implemented with a group. A bucket is drawn on flip chart paper and key players of the community are drawn inside the bucket: local business, government, households (citizens) as three distinct groups. From the top of the bucket arrows show where the money is brought into the community i.e. jobs outside the community, government transfers, tourism, etc. At the bottom of the bucket arrows are places going out of the bucket symbolizing how money is “leaked” out of the community. The community group indicates how the money leaks out. In another exercise the community group then decides if there are any opportunities to stop the leak(s) perhaps by generating local business.

For the purpose of the Metis Women Healing and Community Development Project, we represented a cultural rather than a geographical community. In our leaky bucket we indicated both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community both have input, including financial, into our Metis cultural community. The arrows moved around from the bottom to the top of the bucket showing a circle of input and leaking. To minimize the leaking, it was decided mentorship was critical. Skills, knowledge, protocols, etc. needed to be shared amongst the members of the Aboriginal (Metis) community.



APPENDIX I

Pulling it together: Conversation Café

The facilitator explained the process of a Conversation Café and flip chart paper and pens were placed on the working table for the women to pull the maps together to make some decisions on “where we should go next”. The women chose to start working directly with the question, rather than have all the maps put back up on the wall. There are nine (9) papers:

- 1) Vision- we are trying to untie all women/communities with-in our regions. To educate ourselves. Join lost cultures and family ties, giving, sharing. Heartbeat.

A Moving
 B Everyone
 C Toward
 D Inspired

Strong healthy Metis women working together to support and create vibrant, healthy children, individuals, Families and community connections.
 Encourage Strong Metis Women working together to create, connecting and support, inspire healthy, caring individuals and Families and honoring community loving community connections. And Ha, Ha, Ha.

- 2) Together
 United
 Love
 Stronger Families
 Family unity
- 3) To stay united- and be able to help support each other to accomplish all or our dreams. To instill pride in all our children, and to have universal healing. Symbols of feather and medicine wheel
Bridges Group
 Vision- symbol of heart- ideas-choices-strength-stronger family-connection.

- 4) Where do we go next? What do we want to go as?
 We work, individually, together to build stronger women and children in our communities. The word Families is enclosed in the symbol of a heart. The words heat, hear, beat, choices, Love, ways to keep connected are all enclosed in the symbol of a heart.

5) Vision – active progression towards positive living
 Choices, Connection, Love = Families

6) Connections

Choices

Strength

Unity

Family

Symbol of heart to represent heart-beat, vision, active in positivity, encouragement. Other symbols include an eye and a “stick” woman.

7) M-mentor

E-encourage

T-truth/team

I-independent

S-sisters-recruit, retain, reward.

Vision, “Encouragement”- way to keep connected- clear mind- open heart-willing hands-“Unified Unity”- “self-care”

Mission, Balance! Men/Women/children/Elders, medicine wheel, Recognizing Strengths-in ourselves and others

Objective, Don’t be an enabler! Be inclusive

TEAM

T-together

E-everyone

A-achieves

M-more

Unified Metis Women-wise sisters, Metis sisters.

Metis

Women

Wisdom

Connecting

G-gathering

E-encouragement

U-unity

B-balance

Working individually as well as together- as we build on our strengths and heartbeat-our connection-don’t forget our men

- 8) Working Together to build strong, healthy Women and families (within) for our community.

Heartbeat- the beat of the drum makes the fiddle sing sweeter.

Family First!

The Land belongs to us all, let's keep it safe!

Culture is the heart of our people.

"Spirituality"

The facilitator started making notes on this sheet of paper related to the discussions. It was noted a circle of strength was emerging that allows for shift. Families, Spirituality, self-knowledge, strengthening ourselves, balance, community knowledge, the importance of creating space in our communities to connect/bridge all ages and sexes.

- 9) The last paper was created as a collective effort. The facilitator drew a circle to represent the nature of the conversations- the circular, interconnectedness of our language and philosophy. Within the circle the women summarized the important points:

Spirituality

Collaboration, inclusiveness, all genders and all ages included

Make safe spaces

Balance- know when to quit, when to take initiative

Offer encouragement, tenacity, support and pride

Honour ourselves, honor what you can do

Strengthen ourselves, our families, our communities

TEAM- together everyone achieves more

Vision
We are trying to create
an engaged community
with an open
to diverse cultures & family-
giving sharing.

Heartbeat
Moving
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I
J
K
L
M
N
O
P
Q
R
S
T
U
V
W
X
Y
Z

Moms working together

support + ~~create~~ Create

vibrant, healthy children.

+ Families + community

connections.

Strong & supportive community connections for
Moms, women, working together to create
a healthy, vibrant, family-
giving sharing.

10/04/2013 09:12





Bridges Group



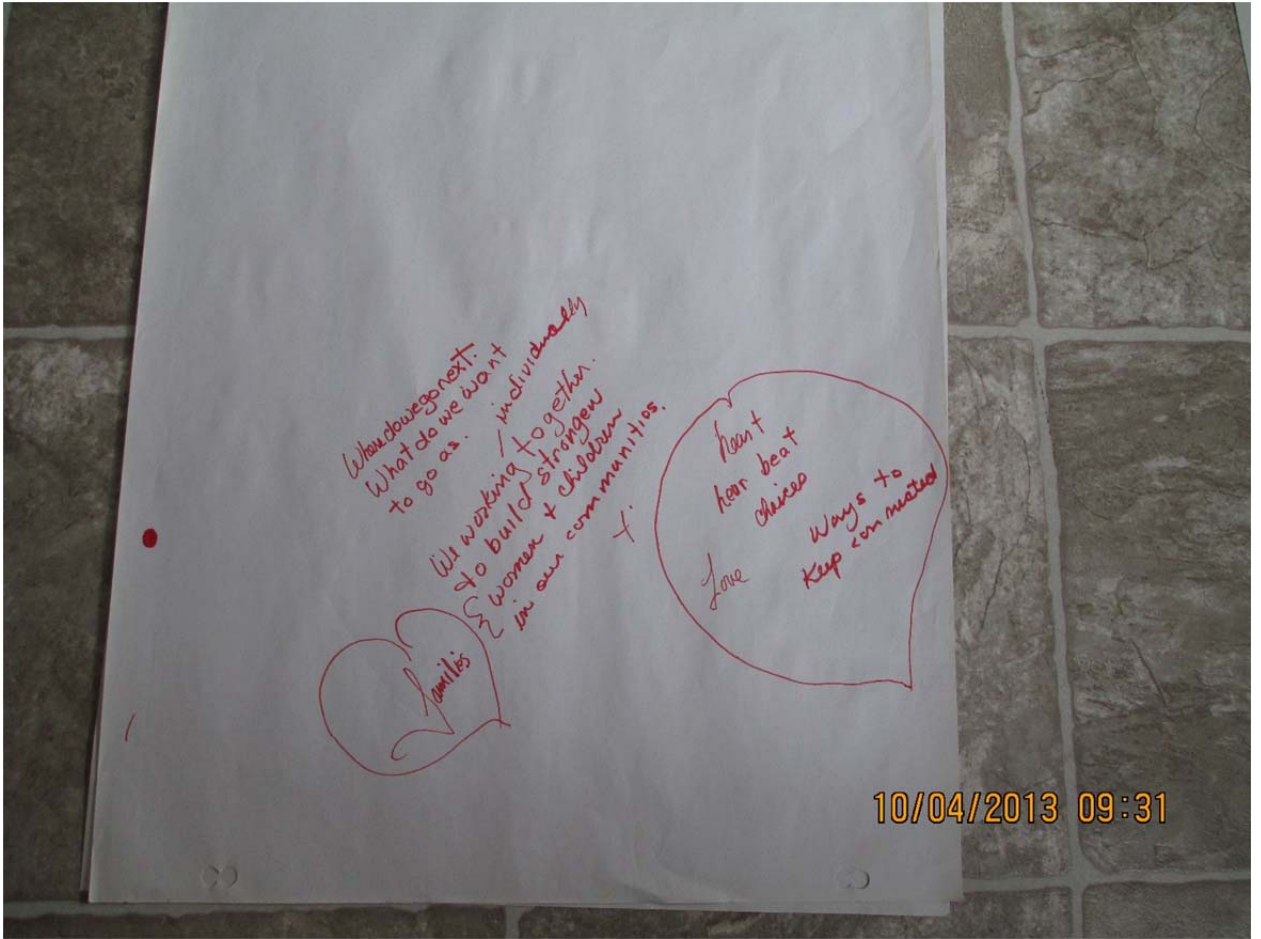
To stay united
 to be able to help support
 each other to accomplish
 all of our dreams.
 to instill pride in all
 our
 children.
 and to
 have universal healing

Vision



- ideas.
- choices.
- strength
- stronger family
- connection

10/04/2013 09:23

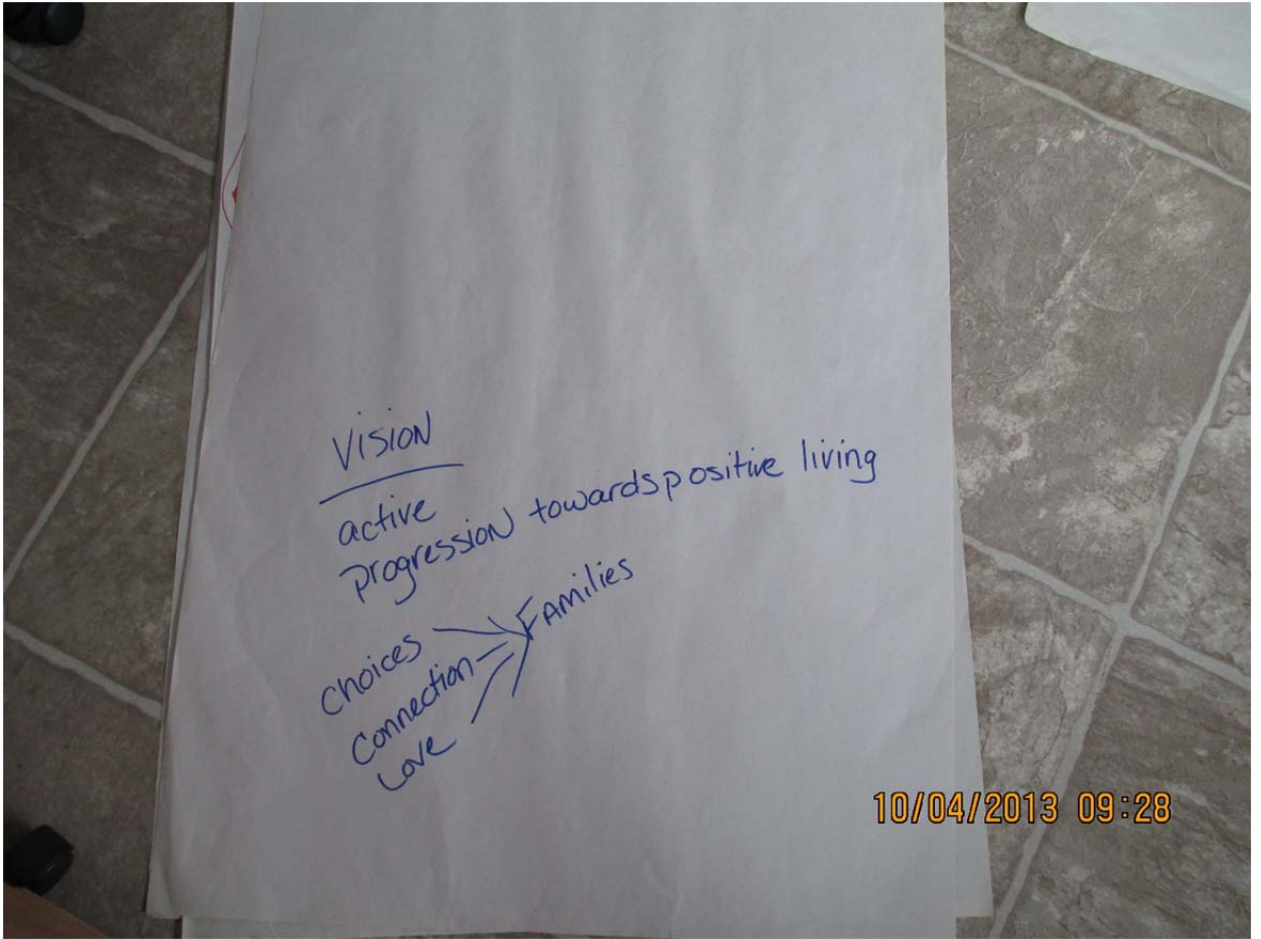


What do we want to go as?
What do we want to go as?
individually
We working together to build stronger women + children in our communities.

Families

Heart
Heart beat
Choices
Love
Ways to Keep connected

10/04/2013 09:31



VISION
active progression towards positive living
Choices → Families
Connection →
Love →

10/04/2013 09:28



10/04/2013 09:39

M more
 E encourage
 T truth/team
 I independent
 S sisters

VISION "Encouragement"
 Way to keep connected
 - Clear mind
 - Open heart
 - Willing hands
 - Unified - UNITY
 - "Self care"
 - "Balance!"

Mission
 - Recognizing Strengths
 - ourselves
 - others

Objective
 - Don't be an enabler!
 - Be inclusive

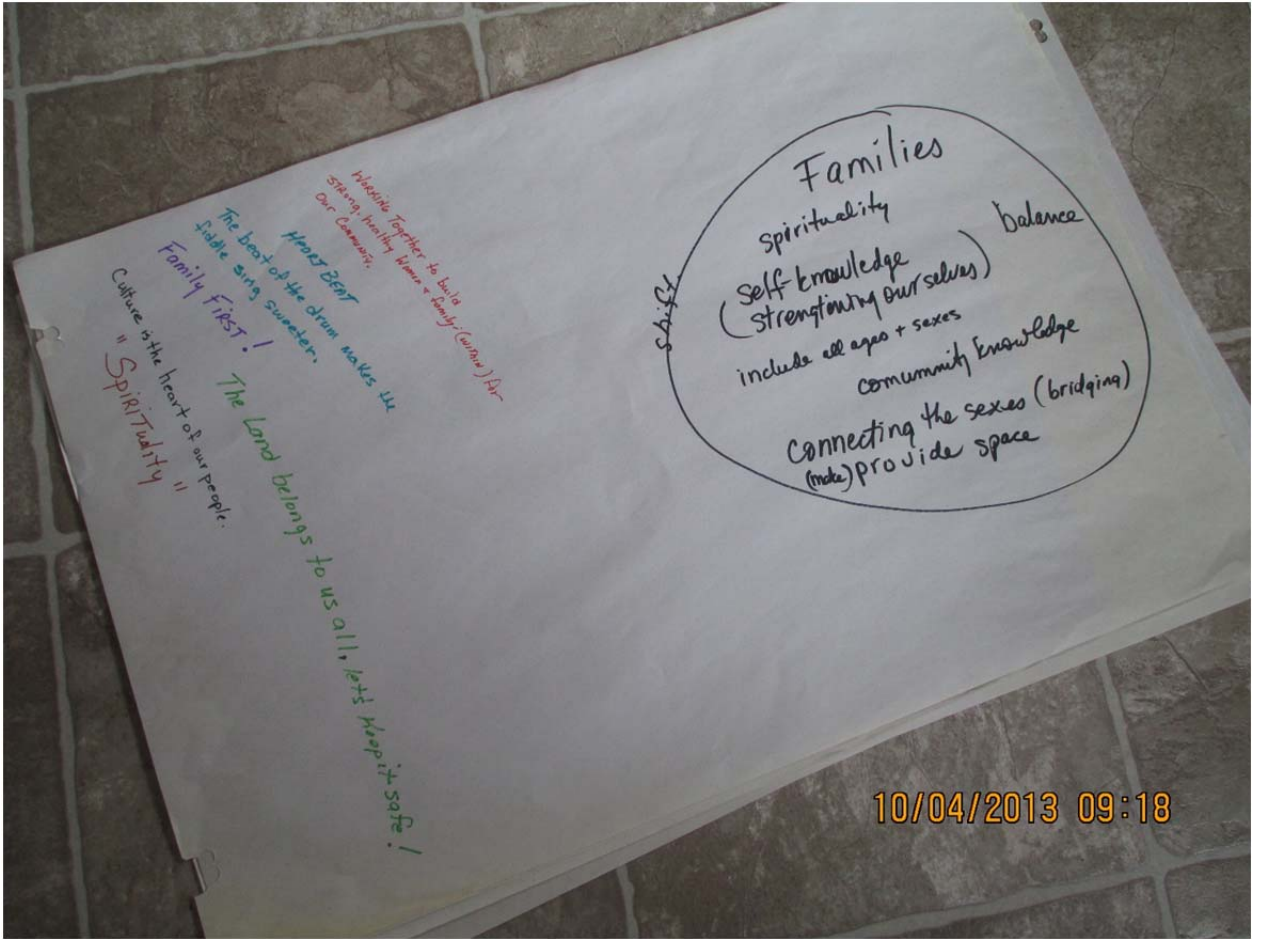
TEAM
 T - together
 E - everyone
 A - achieves
 M - more

Metro
 Women
 Wisdom
 Connecting
 Gathering
 Encouragement
 U-unity
 B-balance

Unified Metro Women
 - rise sister

Men/Women
 children & elder
 Medicine wheel

Working individually
 Working as a team
 Not work, but work together
 - create, build, put
 strength & support
 - own power
 - don't forget women



10/04/2013 09:18



APPENDIX J: EVALUATION

Closing Circle

The participants were asked to offer one word to describe their feelings, impressions of the workshop:

Ancestors	Healing
Thankful	Sisters
Honored	Friends
Enriched	Love
Joyful	Unity
Connection	Full
Grateful	Strength
Song	

Other comments women had made towards the end was their sense of gratitude, they were pleased to have gained new knowledge along with gaining more ancestral knowledge, the collaboration, humour and ceremony were all important pieces of the whole project. Having made a drum “from scratch” along with the ceremony and teachings was seen as valuable and essential as the whole process brought us together, sharing, learning and fully engaging in knowing our drum. It made the opening drum ceremony very powerful to the group.

The Metis dance and music brought increased energy into the group, especially when everyone was getting tired. We were able to share laughter and enjoyment and offered an excellent ending to a long day.

Naming the behaviours we have experienced in our communities as lateral violence and understanding its systemic rather than individual causes is empowering as well as healing.

ABCD offered a simple, relevant community development tool easily explained and implemented in communities.

APPENDIX K

Participant Consent Form

You have been invited to participate in a study called: BC Métis Women Healing and Community Development Project. *How will the Kootenay Métis Women better define and heal themselves, their families and their Nation by examining their history, exploring their current assets and opportunities to develop a strategic plan for their future?*

This project will be conducted by Denise Porter who is a graduate student in the school of Public Administration at the University of Victoria studying a Masters in Community Development. You may contact me by email at hal.deniseporter@gmail.com or by phone at h: 250-344-5758 or c: 250-344-1159.

I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements of this program. The University project supervisor is Dr. Budd Hall. You may contact Dr Hall at:

Email: bhall@uvic.ca phone: 250-721-8062.

The Métis mentor for this project is Ms. Donna Wright. She can be reached at:

Email: dwright@shaw.ca phone: 250-777-3280

You may verify the ethical approval of this research project or express concerns to:

School of Public Administration
University of Victoria
Human and Social Development Building (A302)
3800 Finnerty Road
Victoria, BC V8P 5C2

Purpose and objectives:

The purpose of this research project is to engage the BC Métis Women in participatory research techniques to enable the process of exploring the culture from its historical beginnings to better understand the current circumstances with the expected final outcome of developing a strategic plan for the future. The intent is to build a foundation and have knowledge transformed into a Métis Women's community development model from which to proceed with a strategic economic development plan for the region.

Importance of the Research

You are being asked to participate because the researcher's belief is that the Métis should be responsible in determining their own future. We have long been in the control of a repeated self-defeat pattern which has its basis in the effects of historical events of

colonization. The purpose of this research is to discover ways of transforming this pattern into one of healthy relationships from which we can move towards determining our future.

What is involved

If you agree to participate you will be asked to engage in group gatherings to learn healing techniques (drum and Métis dance) and to develop a map of the community through a cooperative focus and process. You will be asked to provide your thoughts, ideas and feelings about our history, healing and community through discussions and writing.

Regular break and meal times will be implemented with two breaks and three meals per day. Travel will occur on the Thursday with Friday and Saturday and Sunday morning as work days with home travel on Sunday afternoon. You will be asked to offer your reflections, thoughts, ideas and feelings and this information will be gathered in written form on flip charts and “sticky notes”. All information gathered is the property of the Métis for our use. Even the final reports that must be completed for the educational requirements of the researcher will be decided by the community.

For the drum making and Métis dance gathering you will be required to make your own drum which you will be able to keep and use. All supplies will be made available. We will also have a Métis cultural facilitator to aid us in remembering the traditional dance steps. Please wear comfortable clothing and shoes.

Inconveniences and Risks:

You will be asked to attend one, 2.5 day weekend session to complete the project. On the first day you will make a drum and learn Métis dance. On the second day you will be introduced to the concept of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD). This concept involves positive (asset based) thinking and will have the group look at four categories: the human capacity, associations and institutions, natural and physical resources and lastly the economy as they apply to our culture. You will be asked to list the assets from each of these categories which will be placed in the Medicine Wheel framework. This ancient framework was used for millennia by some Aboriginal groups in North America and is commonly used today to frame any topic a group may want to further explore. It follows the four directions, and the lessons to learn from each of these directions. Once the lists are done, we will engage in small and large group work to determine the opportunities that arise from these lists, determine the “lowest hanging fruit” (the most likely attainable opportunity) and begin the strategic planning process necessary to achieve that opportunity. You will be asked for your oral and written participation as we move through the ABCD tools to map our community assets and opportunities.

You may need to contact your employer to arrange for time off. The anticipated risks to you by participating in the project may be some psychological or emotional discomfort in

telling or hearing of stories. You have control over what you wish to share and have the right to leave the gathering/project at any time. The drum making segment and Métis music and dance will offer a healing technique, as well, efforts will be made to refer you to a counselor should you require further assistance.

Voluntary Participation:

You will be asked to sign a consent form on each day and complete evaluations at the end of each day. By signing this consent you agree to participate in this research project.

Researcher Relationship with Participants:

I want to ensure no one feels coerced to participate because of any prior relationship. It is critical that your decision to participate is based on your desire to benefit the Métis Nation and not just the researcher.

Right to Withdraw:

Be aware you have the right to refuse to participate in any section of the gathering. You have the right to withdraw at any time without fear of penalty or consequence. Any information you may provide will be summarized and not specifically identified to you and may be used in the final result of this project. Any information gathered that the participants wish to not share beyond the Métis, will be highlighted and not used in either educational report by the researcher.

Benefits and Compensation:

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include the opportunity to learn more about the history of the Métis, the creation of your drum, learn songs and Métis dance and to be instrumental in developing a community map (picture) from which a strategic plan can eventually be developed for the BC Métis women. Also, Métis specific research is sorely lacking, especially in the field of community (economic) development. Your participation will add needed knowledge. Also costs incurred during your participation such as travel, accommodation and food will be reimbursed/provided and a small honorarium will be provided for attendance.

The information gathered from this study will be the property of the Métis people for our use and it is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared in the following manner:

- 1) The findings are shared with you and the others in the group. The information gathered will be generated by the participants of the community, so it belongs to the community.
- 2) The findings are shared with the University of Victoria through the thesis committee members and during the thesis dissertation. (The final report I must submit in order to graduate).

- 3) If the results are published they may be shared in the academic community. This would require your further consent.

Anonymity, confidentiality and dissemination of results:

As I must complete a report that will be submitted to the University of Victoria once the project is completed, and that pictures will be taken to offer a visual representation of the project for the report, please note the level of confidentiality and anonymity will be protected simply by not releasing any names. If you require a higher level of confidentiality and anonymity we will discuss options including non-participation. All pictures and collected data/information will be made available for all participants to view and decide what will be released for dissemination/sharing, allowing for shared responsibility. Due care and attention will be given to not photograph any participant not wanting their picture released and will be given the opportunity to review the pictures to ensure they are not in any of the pictures. Although this research project will meet the educational requirements of the researcher, more importantly this research has been designed by and for the benefit of the Métis women community. Any information gathered that the participants wish to not share beyond the Métis, will be highlighted and not used in either educational report by the researcher.

If the findings for this research are to be used in the future for further research or publishing, efforts will be made to contact you for your consent.

You will be asked to sign a consent form and complete evaluations each day.

Your signature will be required for all three requests:

1) Your signature below indicates you understand the above conditions of your participation in this research project and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

2) Your signature below indicates your consent to have pictures taken:

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

3) Your signature below indicates your consent to have the pictures released for dissemination:

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

A copy of this consent will be mailed to you.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project. Do not hesitate to contact me with any concerns or questions.

APPENDIX L
Registration Form

PROUD TO BE METIS

BC Métis Women Healing and Community Development Project

Registration Form

Region	Métis Community	First Name	Last Name

Address	Phone number	Cell number	E-Mail address

Event Check-In and Draft Agenda

- Travel day is Thursday March 7th arrival and departure is 12:00 pm March 10th
- Workshop March 8th 9th 10th
- AGENDA is attached
- Introductory Workshop is scheduled from Friday March 8st to 12:00 March 10rd
At the Kutenai Art therapy Institute, 191 Baker Street, Nelson BC (Hall Street entrance)
- This is a BC Métis Women Healing and Community Development Pilot Project, we will be asking that you complete some paperwork that is required please see attached.

Accommodation in Nelson BC - Best Western 153 Baker Street Ph. 250-352-3525

Arrival Date	Number of Nights	Sharing with	
Car Pooling with:	Number of Seats available for Car Pooling:	Preferred Travel Time	Preferred Travel Time

Miscellaneous and Special Requests

Please let us know if you have any allergies, access requirement, specific dietary needs or any other special requests.

APPENDIX M

Project Agenda

METIS WOMEN HEALING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

TRAIN THE TRAINER

March 8, 9, 10, 2013

IN NELSON BC

Friday, March 8, 2013

9:00 Welcome- housekeeping (bathroom, can leave at any time, there are rooms for quiet time) - Opening Ceremony- smudging, drumming, invocation

9:15 Discuss agenda- focus-Train the Trainer-Consent form-

9:30 Drum Making Ceremony- breaks as we need

12:00 Lunch- (catered lunch)

1:00 Drum Making Ceremony

4:00 End of Drum Making Ceremony and Closing Circle for the day and clean up

6:00 Supper and lateral violence video discussion (catered dinner)

7:00 Métis dance

Saturday, March 9, 2013

9:00 Consent forms, Opening Ceremony & invocation

9:30 Gratitude Exercise (homework)

10:00 Break, dance, drum

10:15 Introduction of ABCD process

10:30 Who Are We? mapping exercise

12:00 Lunch

1:00 How Do We Gather? mapping exercise

2:00 What's Our Geography? mapping exercise

3:00 Break, dance, drum

3:30 How Do We Live? mapping exercise

5:00 Closing Circle & Invocation

5:30 Supper

7:00 SMWDA Board meeting

Sunday, March 10, 2013

9:00 Opening Ceremony & Invocation and consent form

9:15 Conversation Café

10:45 Break

11:00 Conversation Café wrap up

11:30 Closing Circle, Prayer, Drum, dance and Celebrate!

12:00 Lunch (participants may decide to leave at this time)

APPENDIX N

Certificate of Participation



Certificate of Participation

Presented to

*For the successful completion of
BC Métis Women Healing and Community
Development Project*

March 10th 2013

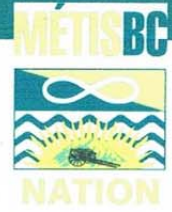
Denise Porter

*Director
Strengthening Métis
Women Development Association*



APPENDIX O

Letter of Permission to perform Aboriginal Research



Denise Porter
1041 King Cres
Golden, BC
V0A 1H2

Dear Denise:

It is with honour that we grant permission to Denise Porter of Golden, BC to conduct a Healing and Cultural Research Project for Métis Women.

Métis Nation British Columbia realizes the importance of this research as a woman in her attempt to advance the health and well-being of Métis women. We understand this also offers the Métis Nation an opportunity to learn more about our people.

The research project represents a major step in understanding the unique priorities, culture and needs while also recognizing that specific research is sorely lacking; therefore, we are pleased to support this project.

Ms Donna Wright, Chair of MNBC, has acted as a mentor. Ms Wright was instrumental in providing support and guidance through the development of the Council Policy Statement (TCPS-2).

Most Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bruce Dumont".

Bruce Dumont
President / CEO
Métis Nation British Columbia

Métis Nation British Columbia's vision is to be a vibrant, self-governing, and economically strong nation.

Métis Nation British Columbia's mandate is to advance the cultural, social and economic well-being of our people.

APPENDIX P
Letter of Ethics Approval