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**THE OKIMAW OHCI HEALING LODGE FOR ESKWEWUK: IS
CORRECTIONAL PRACTICE CONSISTENT WITH HEALING
PRACTICE?**

by

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ABSTRACT

The plethora of reports, Task Forces and Royal Commissions to review the perilous situations of First Nations peoples and in this instance First Nations women, reached its climax in 1989 with *Creating Choices: The Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women*. This report endorsed the need for a correctional facility based, in part, on the philosophies and cultures of First Nations peoples. As a result of many recommendations outlined in this report, the *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge* for federally sentenced First Nations women (*Eskwewuk*) located in Maple Creek, Saskatchewan was constructed. This prison opened its doors to First Nations female offenders in November 1995 with the mandate to afford a culturally appropriate atmosphere for incarceration and (re)habilitation.

The recognition given by Correctional officials that something “different” was required to address the over-representation of First Nations peoples within penitentiaries was a positive first step. A larger problematic, however, not fully addressed with the provision of the *Healing Lodge* continues to exist, that is, that the relationship between First Nations peoples and non-First Nations peoples is ingrained in colonialist and patriarchal attitudes. One must view the construction of a correctional institution structured on the views of First Nations peoples with cautious optimism.

Despite the fact that an *apparent* increase in sensitivity to the needs of First Nations peoples--and more specifically women--in Canada, the *Lodge* may instead prove to be an exemplar of “mock change” or “false generosity” whose purpose it is to tranquilise First Nations peoples.

This thesis will provide a literature review of First Nations women offenders and, using post-colonial and women's standpoints theories, an exploratory analysis of *Okimaw Ohci* itself. My purpose is two-fold: first, I will examine some policy questions and issues that will need to be considered as the *Lodge* continues to operate; and second, outline a "model of healing," based upon First Nations philosophies that could be applied at the *Lodge*, and perhaps at other correctional institutions.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all the Eskwewuk, past and present and to the seven generations of First Nations peoples who have yet to pass through the East Door. It is hoped that the struggles, challenges, setbacks and triumphs have paved the way for a society that is more understanding and open to the ways of our ancestors.

I would also like to dedicate this to my parents, who have continuously supported me and who passed on their wisdom, compassion and belief in for social justice. I love you both very much.

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The time spent on this project could not have happened without the gentle and supportive guidance of my Senior Supervisor, Dr. Margaret Jackson. A sincere and heartfelt *megwetch*. Your patience, commitment and dedication will always be remembered. I would also like to offer my gratitude to Dr. Brian Burtch who joined me in my journey at a time when I had come to a fork in the road.

I also thank Kim Pate, from the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies and Judith Heminger from the Saskatchewan Chapter of Elizabeth Fry who provided me with additional information about the *Healing Lodge* and gave their encouragement and support for my journey.

To those individuals, who acted as my sounding board and who offered constant encouragement, support and enthusiasm about this project, *megwetch*.

To Jerry, my soul-mate and best friend, I want to say thank you for always being there for me and giving me unconditional support - and the occasional jump-start when times got tough and my motivation began to waver. Your sacrifices allowed me to reach my goals and I will always be indebted to you for this.

Ho.

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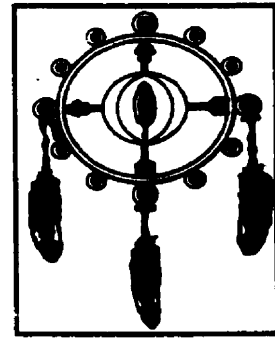
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***THE EAST DOOR*^{1 2}**

Correctional Services Canada (CSC) is entrusted with providing for, caring and assisting its charges once they are sentenced to a period of incarceration by the judicial system. The role of Corrections is extremely important for federal offenders, whose sentence can range anywhere from two years to life imprisonment. In this respect, they

¹ For the purpose of this thesis, I will not use conventional headings for my chapters (i.e., Chapter One, Chapter Two and so forth). I will instead use the four directions of the Medicine Wheel (East, South, West and North) in their respective order. In that the Circle is reflective of the circle of life-form birth to change, to rebirth, I believe this to be the most appropriate approach in light of the thesis topic. *Mag-la-que*, of the Yankton Nation in South Dakota provides the following explanation of the Medicine Wheel:

The medicine wheel design is of very old origin, predating the influences of Anglo-European colonialization.

The Wheel has great meaning to the Native Peoples.

The circle represents life and how everything must continue in the manner set by the Creator.

The crossed lines represent the following: the four winds, the four directions, the four seasons, and the four races of man.

The areas in between represent the secondary directions (NE, SE, SW, NW), as well as the elements, plants, animals, birds and sea creatures.

The feathers hanging down represent the messengers to the Creator (Eagle, Hawk and Raven). The upraised feather in the centre is a sign of friendship.

Respect of the Creator's wishes are an integral part of the circle. No species could or should be destroyed or exterminated. Working together in balance keeps the Circle whole.

(Excerpt from Morrison and Cotler (1997: xiii) *Justice for Natives: Searching for Common Ground.*)

assume a *parens patriae* role that was, at one time, the guiding orientation for handling young offenders, and a flurry of activity occurred within CSC over the last decade to assist in this “parental” endeavour. Exemplars of this activity are the *Mission Statement* (1997), *Correctional Strategy* and *Commissioner's Directives*. The *Mission Statement*, *Correctional Strategy* and *Commissioner's Directives* provide the necessary framework and philosophy to ensure fair and humane treatment within institutions, and that individuals are released with the necessary skills and values that make them law-abiding, honest and sociable individuals. Yet even with these *Mission Statements* (CSC, 1997), *Correctional Strategies* (CSC, nd) and *Directives*³ the situation is far from agreeable. The difficulty of achieving the aforementioned ends within the means of corrections is magnified with the addition of cultural considerations.

Within this backdrop, the treatment of First Nations' peoples^{4 5}, in Canadian Corrections and specifically First Nations women is a blemish on the reputation of this country. The hegemony of the myth of Western superiority is evident in all facets and levels of the environment external to corrections; it is also what steers the correctional enterprise itself. Only within recent history has the ethnocentricity inherent to

³ The East Door is the first Direction in the Circle of Life. The eastern direction is from which one is born. It is where the sun rises, and where new visions are given life.

¹ Please see Correctional Service Canada (1995) “Commissioner's Directive #702 and 702.1 to 702.3: Aboriginal Programming” as an example.

⁴ It is important to note that in conducting my research, almost every text and article relating to First Nations peoples used men as the “centre” of reference. Discussions relating to healing, cultural orientation and so forth failed to take notice of how, when and where the question of gender could affect their findings. Thus, while acknowledging that similar difficulties exist for First Nations men offenders, this thesis focussed upon the gap in research and the literature as it pertains to First Nations women offenders.

⁵ Although the term “First Nations” may be troubling for some, as it could be associated with Nationalism, I find the use of “Aboriginal” more offensive and reflective of colonial ideology. A dissection of the two words involved in the locution “Ab” - “original” points to a subversive way of denying any and all claims of First Nations peoples to being the original inhabitants of this nation we call Canada. In Latin, the prefix “ab” means “off or away from.” I will avoid the use of this term unless it is employed in a direct quote.

corrections come under closer scrutiny. The “nothing works” philosophy⁶ once articulated by Robert Martinson (1974, as cited in Ekstedt and Griffiths, 1988; 211) reflected the failure of corrections and perhaps helped to stimulate greater change:

[w]ith few and isolated exceptions, the rehabilitative efforts that have been reported so far have had no appreciable effect on recidivism.

Meant as a general comment on the rehabilitative attempts of corrections, Martinson’s statement acquires even greater importance in relation to First Nations women, especially those women sentenced to the federal Prison for Women (P4W) in Kingston, Ontario. By 1994, the lack of sensitivity to the cultural and spiritual needs of the women at P4W could no longer be ignored. A change in orientation to ‘holistic healing’ that incorporated the mind, body and soul through the lenses of First Nations cultures and spirituality was mandated⁷ to facilitate the rehabilitative process.

To compensate for the inadequacies and failings of P4W, the Federal Government, following up on the recommendations of *Creating Choices: The Report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women* (conducted in 1989)⁸, proposed that P4W be shut down and replaced with five regional centres and a Healing Lodge for First Nations women (Schienbein, 1992: 427). The *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge*⁹, located in

⁶ Although Martinson himself later refuted this opinion, and others exist regarding the “success” of corrections, there seems to be a return to this attitude on the part of the public. This is evidenced in the rejuvenation of the debate on capital punishment, the return to a “get tough on crime” attitude and more importantly, the increase in security measures at the other regional facilities.

⁷ See the Honourable Louise Arbour Commission (1996) *Commission of Inquiry into Certain Events at the Prison for Women in Kingston*. Ottawa: Solicitor General of Canada, for more details of these events.

⁸ *Creating Choices* and the recommendations and discussions discussed therein has been superseded by the *Arbour Commission Report* (1995).

⁹ During the course of this thesis, I will use Cree words where relevant. This will be in order to reflect the post-colonial nature of the *Healing Lodge*. In this respect, although the public “knows” this facility as “The Aboriginal Women’s Healing Lodge,” my thesis will refer to it using its Cree name of *Okimaw Ochi Healing Lodge*. This name was obtained during a vision quest of an elder and means “Thunder Hills.” It is of extreme relevance that this name was obtained during an Elder’s vision quest as it is one of the most

Maple Creek, Saskatchewan (Schienbein, 1992: 427) was to be the Correctional panacea for First Nations women. To add further legitimacy to this endeavour, it was built on land belonging to the Nekaneet Reserve just outside the town of Maple Creek (Morin, 1993: 23).¹⁰

The most important tenet underlying the construction of the *Healing Lodge*, which officially opened on October 31, 1995 (Norma Green, personal communication), was that it be a place *of* and *for* healing, where First Nations women would receive culturally appropriate and sensitive help in re-establishing harmony in their lives. It was also to assist in the return of these women to their communities upon release, as this was considered “the place where the heart is” (Morin, 1993 and Correctional Services Canada, 1990). In fulfilling its promise to provide a *Healing Lodge for First Nations Women*, there was a failure to make the necessary reciprocal changes to the external agencies (through the development of post-release programs) or correctional policies (such as the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act, 1995*¹¹) that would interplay with the *Lodge*.

The climate that encompasses the *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge* is affected by the debate on the adoption of autonomous systems of First Nations justice. Highlighting this is the question: “[s]hould we provide the right to an Aboriginal justice system first and then should we build the remedy in the form of Aboriginal processes and institutions, or

important “rites of passage” within First Nations cultures. It therefore symbolises the beginning of a “passage” of First Nations peoples (and more specifically First Nations women) from a correctional system that was based on a “just-us” (Euro-Western) philosophy of rehabilitation to one that encompasses a greater sense of *justice*.

¹⁰ The intense “bidding” process between communities in Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories resulted in a staggering 44 letters of interest for the site of the *Healing Lodge*. This was narrowed down to 20 proposals that would be considered. After five months of deliberation, Maple Creek and the Nekaneet Reserve were chosen (Morin, 1993: 29-30) because it met the criteria established: close to fast running water, the presence of wild-life, availability of herbal medicines.

should we build the remedy first and then provide the right to them?" (Giokas, 1993: 190). The debate in the Canadian political sphere that is saying "no" to First Nations justice flies in the face of the ultimate purpose of the *Healing Lodge*--to empower and legitimate First Nations peoples and their unique methods for restoring balance to their communities and peoples. Although the *Lodge* employs First Nations women and Elders, they are still responsible to the Commissioner of Corrections. In turn, the Commissioner is responsible to the Solicitor General who holds accountability for the *Lodge*. Of equal importance, policies that were in place prior to the construction of the *Lodge* remain unchanged (for example the *CCRA*, 1995, the various *Commissioner's Directives* and structures for training the employees). This situates *Okimaw Ohci* in the position of being an "end in and of itself" instead of the "means to a greater end." This leaves room for contradictions and the confounding of problems.

For any real change, benefit or healing to transpire, I contend that we must explore the feasibility of a complete transfer of power of the facility from Corrections Canada to First Nations peoples. In this sense, it could be argued that the employment of First Nations individuals within *Okimaw Ohci* is tokenistic and capricious when accountability and power continues to exist with the status quo stakeholders. First Nations communities must guide and determine the future direction of the *Lodge*¹². Moreover, Corrections must look to First Nations peoples¹³ for a "model of healing"

¹¹ From this point on, the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*, will be referred to as the *CCRA*.

¹² This is not to say that others (non-First Nations) cannot participate and provide assistance with the direction of First Nations justice. The goal is to *work together* and integrate aspects of both systems of justice - taking the best aspects of one and integrating it with the best aspects of the other.

¹³ This is not to argue that other cultural groups cannot make a similar claim.

instead of superimposing their own brand of psychology and conceptions of healing¹⁴.

However, a starting point may very well lie in permitting the Nekaneet Reserve itself to assume control.

This is not an overnight process and as such will require an incremental approach. In the interim, a policy of collaboration must occur between the *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge*, First Nations communities, Elders and key players in Corrections (Commissioner of Corrections and Solicitor General). Simultaneously, conditions external to the *Lodge* must be addressed. A compelling need exists to develop programs within First Nations communities themselves to provide a transitional phase for the released offender. These programs would be developed to serve the dual function of assisting both the community and returning offenders. Research clearly indicates that First Nations communities at large suffer from the same ills (substance abuse, histories of violence/abuse, lack of education) as their First Nations sisters within penal institutions.

It is well known that there is an over-representation of First Nations peoples within Canadian penal institutions. *Creating Choices* indicated that although First Nations women make up less than 3% of Canada's female population, they represent approximately 15% of women under federal sentence, most from the Prairie provinces (1990). Although, in the recent past, the small numbers of female prisoners was the rationale articulated for the failure to develop anything more than a "malestream"¹⁵, system of prisons for federally incarcerated women, current thinking recognizes that

¹⁴ See Duran and Duran (1995) *Native American Postcolonial Psychology*, for a thought-provoking examination of the different strategies and perceptions required when addressing the healing needs of First Nations peoples.

¹⁵ The alternative approach has been coined "women's centred" and has been defined as "taking into account women's life experience and needs from a female perspective." At this juncture, a question arises that we must ask, "What 'woman' should one use in order to obtain this centering?" Are we to use a particular *group* of women and generalize from this, or do we take a woman-by-woman perspective?

women often require a different approach to prison programming than their male counterparts. Carrying this notion even further, First Nations groups have argued that their *Eskwewuk* must also have their specific needs met while incarcerated.

The last two decades have been witness to heightened discussions by Corrections (and outside organizations) to “finally” close the Kingston Prison for Women (P4W). Almost from its inception, requests and recommendations were made to shut it down due to the conditions women were subjected. In relation to First Nations women, prior to the 1980’s, the failure of this prison to provide services or programs that contained any semblance of cultural and spiritual relevance simply magnified the indignities that they were forced to suffer. Further support was provided when a court decision came down that reaffirmed the need to alter the system of incarceration for First Nations women.

In the 1990 Saskatchewan Queen’s Bench case, *R. v. Daniels*, the court decided that to imprison women from the prairie provinces in P4W was unconstitutional (Schienbein, 1992: 431). The basis for this decision lay in section 11 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (“cruel and unusual punishment”). It was argued that the imprisonment of women thousands of miles from their families was “cruel and unusual punishment.” Section 15 of the *CCRA*, that covers issues of equality, was also raised, in that women did not have equal access to penal institutions in their home provinces, as did their male counterparts. Although the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal later overturned this decision on a technicality, an important step had been made for First Nations women. This decision indicated that Canadian judges were coming to realise that ethnicity and cultural roots play an important role in the shaping of experiences. For First Nations women, ethnicity could not be separated from gender when trying to understand the

situation faced by First Nations women in P4W--and likewise in the *Healing Lodge*.

Mary Ellen Turpel (in Schienbein, 1992: 431) succinctly explains this point: "I cannot separate my gender from my culture. I am not a woman sometimes and a Cree at others . . . both are intertwined in the way I experience and understand the world." The climate for change was further emphasised by a further statement by Turpel:

Canada is a state with a rule of laws. *Aboriginal peoples' laws, customs, traditions and cultures have been ignored or suppressed for far too long.* Aboriginal peoples' experiences are diverse, and a range of options must be considered based on culture, history and those desired by Aboriginal peoples themselves. Working with the existing concepts and premises of the Canadian criminal justice system is simply too confining- *don't fence us in* (emphasis added).

These changes might seem drastic, but we have just begun the journey. Time, effort, respect and an understanding of what First Nations female prisoners have experienced will put Canada back on the map¹⁶ as a country that is not afraid to make ground-breaking changes. Any less than this will merely serve to give life to Martinson's (1974) disturbing, yet recanted, belief that 'nothing works.'

Not surprisingly, initial and secondary observations of the *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge* are positive. The establishment of *Okimaw Ohci* can be considered one of the most progressive steps the Canadian government has made in its relationship with First Nations peoples since amending section 12 (1) (b) of the *Indian Act* with Bill C-31 in

¹⁶ Some might question how "far off the map" Canada actually is in relation to First Nations peoples. However, one only needs to remember the damning remarks made by the United Nations in relation to Canada's treatment of First Nations peoples. A good description of conditions faced by First Nations peoples in general is provided by Geoffery York (1990) *The Dispossessed: Life and Death in Native Canada*.

1985.¹⁷ In this respect, I believe that we must be cautious not to make hasty evaluations, positive or negative, of the *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge*. This thought is predicated on the belief that Canada continues to perpetuate the hegemony of the colonizer in relation to First Nations peoples. The failure of Canada to settle both comprehensive and specific land claims, the third-world conditions of reserves, and the high levels of unemployment (to name but a few issues) support this view.¹⁸

The *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge* will be examined using both post-colonial and feminist standpoints¹⁹ theory, and it will be shown that the construction of the *Lodge* is

¹⁷ As it was later discovered with this amendment to the *Indian Act*, all was not what it seemed to be. Discrimination continued to be perpetuated with the new demarcation of 6 (1) and 6 (2) Indians.

¹⁸ The courts of Canada have made another ground-breaking change in the way justice is dispensed to First Nations peoples. Very recent changes to the Criminal Code of Canada have accepted that First Nations peoples are, by the very nature of their colonial history, in a unique situation. Added to the Code in 1996, Section 718.2 (e) states the following:

718.2 [Other sentencing principles] A court that imposes a sentence shall also take into consideration the following principles:

(e) all available sanctions other than imprisonment that are reasonable in the circumstances should be considered for all offenders, with particular attention to the circumstances of aboriginal offenders.

1995, c.22, s.6; 1997, c.23, x. 17.

In a case that reached the Supreme Court of Canada in September 1995 (*R. v. Galude*) where a First Nations female offender who had killed her husband after an evening of drinking, clarification was provided on how broadly this section could be interpreted. It was decided that "(t)he effect of s. 718.2 (e) directs judges to undertake the sentence of such offenders individually, but also differently, because the circumstances of aboriginal people are unique. In sentencing an aboriginal offender, the judge must consider: (a) the unique systemic or background factors which may have played a part in bringing the particular aboriginal offender before the courts; and (b) the types of sentencing procedures and sanctions which may be appropriate in the circumstances for the offender because of his or her particular aboriginal heritage or connection . . . Judges may take judicial notice of the broad systemic and background factors affecting aboriginal people, and of the priority given in aboriginal cultures to a restorative approach to sentencing" (cited in Jackson, 1999: 4-5).

Several other cases have since come before the courts that will test the veracity of this section. Arguments of discrimination or unwarranted leniency may be levied against First Nations offenders and thus do more damage to the justice advancements desired by First Nations communities. The full impact of this legislation has yet to be determined.

¹⁹ I have deliberately added an "s" to this word to reinforce my belief that there is more than just one "standpoint." These standpoints are affected by the individual life experiences of a woman as she experiences them. Although I do not contend that a "collective" standpoint of women does not exist, to ignore the individual experiences of women based on culture, socio-economic status, gender identity and so forth, would be to essentialize the experiences of women who maintain the "status quo" while silencing

far from a *complete* victory for First Nations peoples or the women who are sentenced to this facility. In this respect, I raise the questions: Is the *Healing Lodge* merely another example of the Canadian colonial regime to tranquillise and appease the demands of First Nations peoples at a superficial level, thereby reflecting a condition of mock change or false generosity? Is rhetoric truly reflected in practice? Using this as a stepping-stone, I will attempt to develop a “model of healing” that is both accountable to and reflective of a First Nations interpretation of healing.

Problems of Access

Throughout the planning of this thesis, many obstacles and changes in direction occurred relating to accessibility to *Okimaw Ohci*. Contact was made with the Program Director of *Okimaw Ohci* in 1996 to introduce myself and to discuss my interest this new concept and direction for a correctional institution. After several discussions, in which I explained my intent and agenda to the satisfaction of the administration, access to *Okimaw Ohci* was obtained. In that my desire was to simply “observe” the daily events as they occurred, I was also given permission to participate in programming²⁰, join the facility for a Sun Dance Ceremony, and participate in the morning Healing Circle/Talking Circle. Due to the recent inauguration of this facility, I understood that asking administrators for permission to conduct personal interviews with the *Eskwewuk*, Elders and Administrators would create hostility and erect unnecessary barriers between myself and those in positions of power at the facility.

those who society view as falling outside these parameters. I have believe it is necessary to change the demarcation of “feminist” to “women’s.” This will be explained at a later point in this thesis.

At the prompting of my SFU Committee at the time, it was stated that such a research endeavour could not omit the voices of the Eskwewuk. Although, it was my belief that simple access to *Okimaw Ohci* was of utmost importance to enable observations of the actual changes to programming, building structure, interaction between staff and Eskwewuk and so forth, after deliberation and thought, I changed my approach. Although I was interested in conducting an exploratory *policy* analysis to avoid losing access to the facility that would result in adding survey methodology²¹, I added this to my proposal. As contact with the Program Director was consistently maintained, I telephoned her to advise her of the additions to my thesis and faxed copies of the three questionnaires for her approval.

This drastic addition to my initial “participant/observer” role proved to be too intrusive and all access to *Okimaw Ohci* was revoked. After several discussions with my SFU Committee, it was decided that I would return to my initial intention to conduct a policy analysis and abandon the questionnaires. Fully understanding the trepidation and position of the administrators, I did not attempt to contact the Program Administrator for approximately six months. After this “cooling down” period, contact was once again established and I was given permission to access *Okimaw Ohci*, however, where I had initially been given several days access, I was now permitted to visit for a single day.

Attempting to organize the trip to Saskatchewan proved to be very difficult; several unreturned calls were placed to the Program Director, and when contact was finally made, I was advised that I would be permitted to attend *Okimaw Ohci* for a one-

²⁰ This was only to occur after having obtained informed consent from the program participants.

²¹ Discussions with my Supervisory Committee resulted in the development of 3 separate questionnaires to address issues relating to programming, healing, cultural orientation and overall perceptions of *Okimaw Ohci* from the Eskwewuk, staff and administrators and the Elders/Healers

hour tour of the facility. Although clarification for this gradual decrease in accessibility was never provided, it is clear that my request to interview administrators, elders and offenders²² was perceived as hasty and threatening. Perhaps the administrators will be more amicable to this type of research in the near future.

Limitations of the Research

The absence of direct contact with those who experience *Okimaw Ohci* on a daily basis has somewhat limited the depth of my research, but it does not render the research invalid.²³ Loss of access has, without question, limited my ability to assess the interplay between the daily functioning of *Okimaw Ohci* and correctional policies. In that this work is exploratory in nature, it permits the analysis of interactions between existing correctional policies and the development of an entirely new type of correctional facility. Interviews, questionnaires and other qualitative methodologies will, however, be required in the future.

An additional limitation is the missing voices of Elders. Initially, I sought to speak with Elders who lived in British Columbia and had spent time at *Okimaw Ohci* to gain further wisdom and teachings to assist with the development of a model of healing. It was hoped that this would augment my inability to visit the *Lodge*. After several months of failed attempts, I made the decision that if it was not possible to speak with Elders who had spent time with the *Eskwewuk* at the *Lodge*, I would attempt to speak with any Elders who were willing to meet with me. Unfortunately, due to time

²² Please refer to the Appendices for copies of the consent forms and questionnaires that were sent to *Okimaw Ohci*.

²³ Some may perceive this (in)action as a silencing of First Nations voices and placing primary importance on paperwork policies and directives.

constraints, this also proved impossible. The gravity of this omission cannot and should not be overlooked. Elders are the keepers of wisdom, knowledge and traditional teachings. The sharing of their stories would have provided invaluable knowledge and insight in my development of a “model of healing.”

The sparse amount of information available pertaining to *Okimaw Ohci* resulted in numerous questions being raised that were difficult to answer with any degree of certainty. However, this limitation may prove to be beneficial. As an outsider looking in, and with the objectivity that this status provides, the issues and questions raised may direct those who are developing policies and programs for *Okimaw Ohci* to areas that had previously been overlooked or ignored.

I feel that a caveat is also required about the research that I chose to include and/or not include in my work. Due to the paucity of First Nations female voices in correctional literature combined with my intent to capture their voices, I may have omitted research conducted by (First Nations) males speaking to the issues of their brothers serving time. However, I do acknowledge that the voices of non-First Nations women, speaking to the conditions of First Nations women serving time *were* include (such as LaPrairie and Faith). This compromise was felt to be the best option, and the least of the two evils.

Although not necessarily a limitation, per se, is the *exploratory nature*, of this work. The recent construction of the *Lodge* and the shortage of “academic” (and other) material relating to *Okimaw Ohci*, I have discussed issues and provided solutions that may not exist. Subsequently, the recommendations I make at the conclusion of this thesis may result in unforeseeable negative consequences. In this the reader will need to keep in

mind that the situations I have presented may no longer exist or they may have magnified since women started serving their time at *Okimaw Ohci*

Finally, this thesis is limited by my own shortcomings and interpretations and analysis of Correctional policies and their relationship to the *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge*, and by my understandings of First Nations cultural and spiritual traditions and practices. I assume ownership for any errors, omissions or misrepresentations. I can only hope that the questions I have been forced to ask of myself while conducting this research will assist me as I discover my own spiritual path and my relationship with the Creator.

Into the Looking Glass: A Self-Hermeneutic Glance

When reading this thesis, it is important for the reader to be aware of “where I am coming from.” In other words, who I am and how my past experiences have framed my standpoint and perspective on the research conducted.

Since I can remember, when first encountering someone, one of the first questions they asked me--even before names and introductions were exchanged--was “what are you?” (read: “what race are you?” or “where are you from?” or “what nationality are you?”). I always found this to be an interesting (read: amusing) question, as I did not understand *why* knowing ‘what I was’ ethnically was an important issue. Perhaps they felt it was a valid question due to my brown skin colour and the overwhelming need society places on its members to constantly categorise and box people. Due to my mixed ancestry, and the very obvious differences in the outward appearances of my mother’s and father’s family, I would often ask my parents about my lineage. Although initially it was to respond to the questions of others with greater ease, as I became older (and still to

this day) it is more for myself than anyone else. Numerous discussions occurred with my parents that left me with more questions. My father, being European in origin, and my mother hailing from North Africa were both “white.” I was left constantly asking myself, “So why am I brown?!” The answer finally came from a cousin who advised that there was “Indian” (read: First Nations) on my mother’s side of the family.

Attempts to find out more about my heritage, have to date been much like slamming one’s head against a brick wall. Needless to say, uncovering this *one* piece of information has helped me to put some level of understanding around my behaviours while growing up, my sleeping dreams and my ability to more easily relate to First Nations people and traditions. It is, perhaps, one of the reasons that lead me in the direction I have taken with this thesis--so that I might gain a better understanding of who I am, where I come from, and where I am going.

My experiences working and volunteering in community corrections has also added a particular flavour to my analysis and interpretations of whether current correctional policies and the *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge* are reminiscent of the days when I tried to fit a square peg into a round hole. I have been witness to (and almost guilty of) the co-optation of counter-hegemonic values and beliefs to ones that reflect the status quo. I am also keenly aware of how hard the key players and stakeholders in the correctional enterprises I have been a part of are afraid of drastic change and disruption of current practices. And, I have also been the brunt of much backlash when I have voiced my opinions.

It is with this “baggage” that I come to the task of my thesis, and constructing the interpretations, comments and statements. In this respect, they are only the interpretations, comments and statements that I am able to make based on the place that I

find myself *today*. This is not to say that my perspective may not change as I continue down my life path, for that is always a possibility. To think otherwise would be to ignore all the future possibilities and experiences that will broaden and affect who I am and how I see the world I live in.

Overview of the chapters

The South Door²⁴ (Chapter Two) provides a literature review of the conditions First Nations women suffered by serving time in a culturally inappropriate correctional facility. It will also provide a review of the current policies of Corrections Canada, which continues to be inappropriate for use in at the *Healing Lodge*. As one moves through the West Door (Chapter Three),²⁵ post-colonial and standpoint feminist theories are examined. Following from this, a preliminary “model of healing” that is culturally relevant and grounded in First Nations values, ideas and knowledge will be proposed. The North Door²⁶ (Chapter Four) will provide a brief discussion regarding the paths First Nations communities may take to assist both themselves and Eskwewuk achieve peace and harmony in their lives. The healing process has begun with the development of the *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge*, and now we can attempt to discern where this path might lead us. Finally, I return to the East Door²⁷ (Chapter Five) where conclusions based upon

²⁴ This is the second direction of the Medicine Wheel. It represents a time of learning, and is therefore an appropriate place to provide a literature review of what First Nations women have (had to) experience in the Canadian carceral system.

²⁵ The West Door is the third direction of the Medicine Wheel. This represents the need and time of healing in the lives of First Nations women.

²⁶ The fourth direction we come to is the North. This represents the peace that is found when an individual finds their direction and goal in life.

²⁷ Returning to the East Door represents that we have come full circle. From this point, we continue back through the different directions of the Medicine Wheel until our path in life is completed.

the information of the preceding chapters, and recommendations for future research in this area are provided.

Below is a part of a story that serves to explain why I chose to use the Medicine Wheel and the Four Directions as the framework for this research:

. . . . the People All Heard Singing, and they Looked Up. There, Sitting in the North, they Saw a White Coyote and he was Singing. They Also Looked to the South, and Sitting there was a Green Coyote. She too was Singing. They Looked to the West, and Sitting there was a Black Coyote and he was Singing. Finally, they Looked to the East, and Sitting there was a Gold Coyote and she was Singing.

The People Sat there Quietly All Together and Learned these Four Beautiful Songs. They were the Songs of the Four Lions. Then the People Looked All Around and Saw that Each of them was Wearing a Coyote Robe. They put their Arms Around Each Other and Began to Dance Toward the Flowering Tree Together in a Great Circle. The People were Happy.

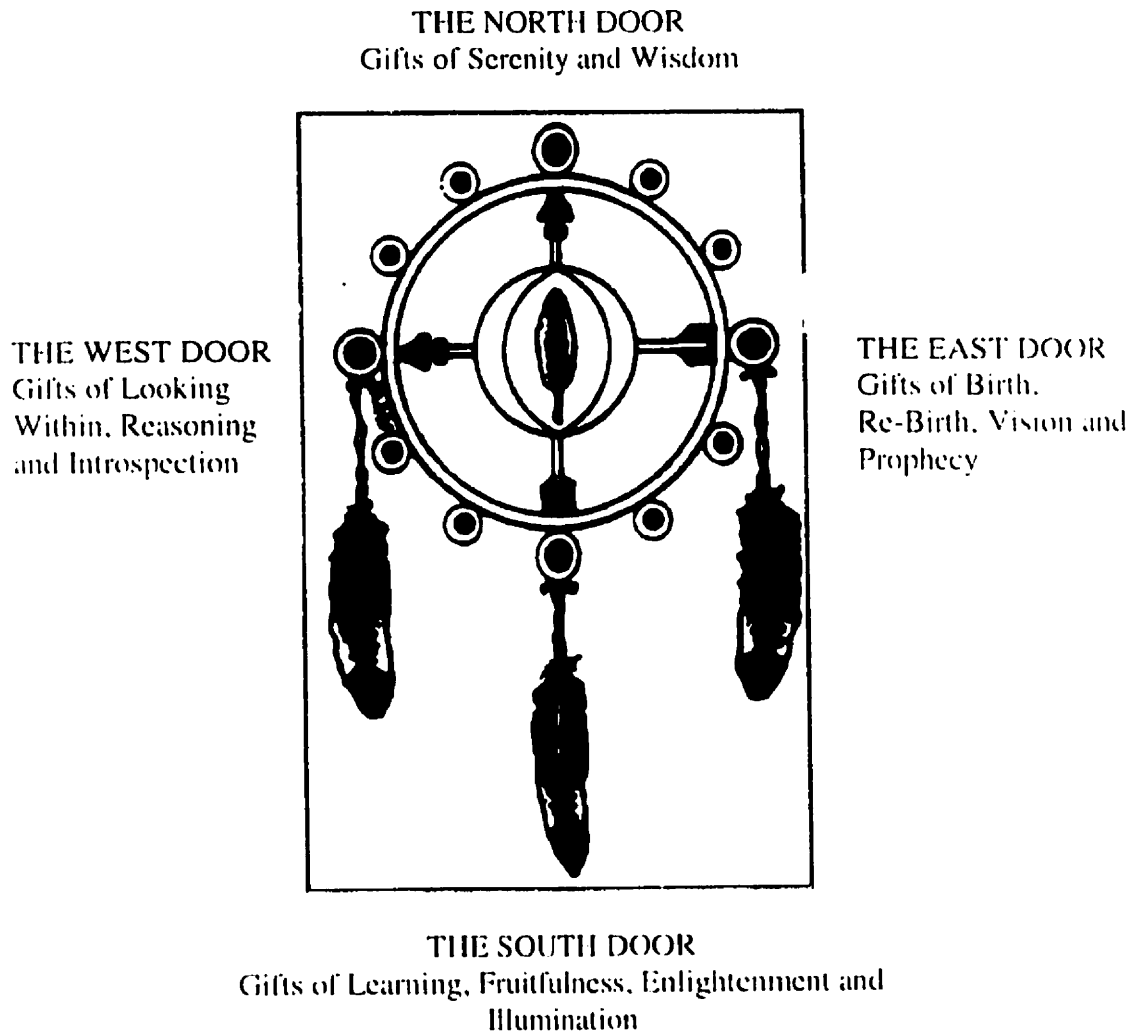
This Story we have just heard has now become a portion of our awareness, or understanding. Stories are like paths, or Ways. Whenever we hear a Story, it is as if we were physically walking down a particular path that it has created for us. Everything we perceive upon this path becomes part of our experience, both individually and collectively.

This particular story has within it many Mirrors which Reflect certain realities that exist in all of us. Each one of these little Mirrors, when we look into it as a whole thing, or Wheel, can be a Teacher for us. So that you may understand this more fully, let us now experience the Story once more in a new way. Let us open our eyes wide as we walk down its path a second time, so that we may look into some of its Mirrors and see the many images that are Reflected there for us.

(Storm, 1972: 16-17)(original emphasis)

Figure 1

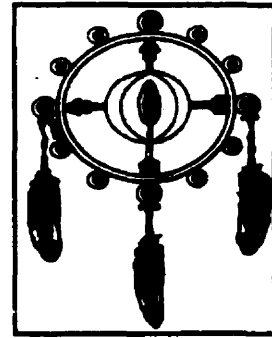
The Medicine Wheel



If teachings of First Nations women are cast aside, displaced or ignored, the traditions

and cultures of First Nations peoples are only partially alive. In the words of Ossenontion and Skonaganleh:ra (as cited in Monture-OKanee, 1992c: 52):

There was an understanding that the woman in many respects, certainly spiritually, was more powerful and complete and this is because she has a direct relationship to Mother Earth, Grandmother Moon, and to the female elements of the waters, all of which we cannot live without. The men understood that gifts were given them by the Great Mystery - ceremonies and teachings - and that there were things they had to do to be able to walk the same road beside her, because she had been given the responsibility for completing creation, something that she still carries, even now. Two halves, with very different elements and very different responsibilities, make up the medicine wheel, and both halves have to be there to make it complete.



***THE SOUTH DOOR*²⁸**

Underlying the use of human rights terminology is a plea for recognition of a different way of life, a different idea of community, of politics, of spirituality - ideas which have existed since time immemorial, but which have been cast as differences to be repressed and discouraged since colonization . . . asking for recognition [of] another culture, there seems to be something at stake which is larger than human rights, and certainly larger than the texts of particular documents which guarantee human rights . . .

Mary Ellen Turpel, 1993

To fully understand the bleak situation faced by incarcerated First Nations women, one must examine the macro context of their dealings with Canadian society and the social and economic factors that determine their location in the hierarchy of Canadian society.

The best known and most consequential legal factor relating to First Nations women in Canada was s. 12(1)(b) of the *Indian Act, 1867*. This removed the status of the

²⁸ To return voices of those First Nations women who have been silenced behind the walls of Western-European colonialism, I have inserted personal anecdotes from First Nations women serving time at the Kingston Penitentiary for Women. Although these passages might be somewhat lengthy, to delete the thoughts of these women would be in contradiction to my use of women's standpoints and post-colonial theories. It is the personal accounts that paint the picture of what the life of an Aboriginal women is, in colonial institutions of justice, and in a colonially structured life.

woman through her marriage to a non-First Nations or non-status man. The consequences of this section on the lives of First Nations women were enormous:

Upon marriage, the Indian woman must leave the reserve and must dispose of any property on the reserve which she owns. She may also be prevented from inheriting property. She and her children are not recognized as Indian under the terms of *The Indian Act*, are refused all the amenities stemming from that legislation, and may be prevented from returning to live with her family on the reserve even if in dire need. At death, her body may not be buried on the reserve (LaPrairie, 1984a: 165).

Although this particular section of the *Indian Act* was repealed through the enactment of Bill C-31 in 1985, the repercussions are still in evidence. The new *Indian Act* creates two new classifications of status Indians - 6(1) and 6(2). Each of these classifications grants different rights to the individual, and depending on whether or not the person is a male or a female, the rights are again different.²⁹ Therefore, while the more blatant discrimination has been removed from the *Indian Act* on the basis of sex, the effect of the discrimination persists. The Native Women's Association of Canada (in Holmes, 1987: 22) explains this:

A brother and sister who were both status each married non-Indians before April 17, 1985. The brother's wife gained status, so their children are status and band members. Not so for the sister who married a non - Indian. Under Bill C-31, she will regain status and band membership, but her children are entitled to less. They can gain status only and have 'conditional' membership.

The legacy of past discrimination means that the numbers of individuals with 'Indian' status will continue to decrease with each proceeding generation. The effects of loss of

status as per section 12(1)(b) is only one aspect of life for First Nations women in Canadian society. An examination of their employment status, educational levels, causes of death, suicide rates and marital status also help to give a clearer understanding of the disadvantaged position of First Nations women and their disproportionate involvement in the criminal justice system.

According to information on the income levels of First Nations women, as compared to the rest of society, First Nations women reported lower incomes than non-First Nations women in both part-time and full-time employment. Moreover, the jobs they obtain are at lower pay, skill, and entry levels than the average and moreover, they tend to offer fewer opportunities for advancement (LaPrairie, 1984a: 165). It has been indicated that if these women had had jobs prior to incarceration, they were temporary in nature (LaPrairie, 1984a: 166 & Johnson, 1986: 60). Empirically, the unemployment rate of the incarcerated First Nations women was over eight times the national average (Johnson, 1986: 60). The dismal employment situation of First Nations women takes on added significance when viewed in relation to the marital and family situation of the First Nations women:

First, the birth rate for registered Indian women is almost twice as high and the birth rate for unmarried, registered Indian women is about five times as high as those of non-Indian, unmarried women. Second, Indian women are also more likely to be heads of households but less likely to be married than non-Indian women (LaPrairie, 1984a: 166).

Suicide rates of First Nations peoples in Canada are another indicator of their precarious life stories. They far exceed those for the non-First Nations population

²⁹ For those interested in a more detailed discussion and explanation of the effects of this legislative

(LaPrairie, 1984a: 166). Sayer (as cited in LaPrairie, 1984a: 166) pointed to the "crippling web of dependency" that the welfare system³⁰ created for the First Nations peoples which in turn has denied many of them the pride and satisfaction of self-sufficiency.³¹

On a micro-level analysis, it is important to examine the personal situations of First Nations women on their entering the federal penitentiary. The very profound difficulties in making adjustments within the institution and in serving her sentence relates to the overwhelming fact that:

Almost every Sister. . . were raised in foster homes, sent to juvenile detention centers, were victims of sexual abuse, were victims of rape, And finally entering Prison for Women, we have all become victims of bureaucracy because we do not have the right color of skin, the right kind of education, the right kind of social skills and the right kind of principles to get out of here (Sugar, 1989: 89).

amendment, please refer to Joan Holmes (1987) "Bill C-31: Equality or Disparity? The Effects of the New *Indian Act* on Native Women." Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

³⁰ By "welfare system" I am referring to social assistance/employment insurance. In many communities, daily survival is dependant on receipt of money from government sources. The dependency this creates results in feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and a lack of self-determination.

³¹ Note also a comment made by Thomas R. Berger (a former justice of the Supreme court of BC), who rightly stated: "the cluster of pathologies which characterize many of Canada's First Nation's communities are not simply the results of poverty, but of people trying desperately to preserve their cultural identity (1977: x)

Life at P4W³²

The "typical" First Nations female offender in both federal and provincial correctional institutions can be described as being under 25 years of age with less than a high school education; she has two or more children; she is unemployed with no previous job training program or no previous employment history. She is often "addicted to the use of alcohol and was under the influence of alcohol at the time of the crime. She was between the ages of fourteen and eighteen at the time of her first arrest and has been sentenced anywhere between three to seventeen times" (Jefferson, 1986: 60-61).

Although First Nations peoples constitute only 2-3% of the population of Canada, First Nations women comprise anywhere from 20-30% of the inmate population at P4W. A study conducted in 1984 revealed that in P4W, 70% of the First Nations inmate population were incarcerated for violent offences such as murder, manslaughter attempted murder, assault and wounding as compared to 32% for non-First Nations women (Johnson, 1986: 65; LaPrairie, 1987a: 123). According to the Leonard Peltier Defence Committee (1991: np), as of 1991, the percentage of First Nations women behind the walls has remained high, along with a large majority of these women being sentenced for violent acts (acts of self-defence against abusive individuals). *The Manitoba Justice Inquiry* noted that (1991: 500) more recent statistics on First Nations

³² Throughout this section, I rely heavily on the work done by Sugar and Fox. It is important for the reader to note that these women represent only one particular perspective, and that others exist. I chose to rely so heavily on these women due to the notably harsh perspective and attitude they exhibit in their writing. It can be argued that in the past women (and especially First Nations women) have been afraid to voice their opinions and have thus been dis-empowered. By adding the voices of these two First Nations ex-offenders, it was my intention to give witness to the printed words of these two individuals (with the assumption that

women in P4W indicated that "almost three quarters of First Nations women, have been committed for violent offences (i.e. murder, attempted murder, wounding, assault, and manslaughter) and less than one quarter for property offences (i.e. theft, break and entering)." From the viewpoint of criminological analysis, this fact demarcates all First Nations women as an unusual group. Violent crimes are typically perpetrated by men; women on the other hand are usually the targets or victims of violence. LaPrairie, (1987a: 123) and Johnson (1986: 61) observe that there also seems to be a greater propensity for First Nations women to be involved in alcohol-related crime.

To be female and regarded as 'violent' is to be especially stigmatised in both the eyes of the people who guard you and by the administrators of the institutions itself. This is perhaps one of the justifications employed at P4W for the blanket 230 code being handed down to First Nations women. This code is a section of the Penitentiary Services regulations that serves to create an institutional charge for the disruption of the "good order of the institution" (Sugar and Fox. 1990: 468). Among other women who are serving sentences for other "less serious crimes", First Nations women stand out markedly. They are seen as not fitting the stereotypes (for even deviant women are categorically slotted into the appropriate stereotype) and are therefore feared and labelled as "requiring special handling" (Sugar and Fox, 1990: 470). Thus, the effect of being labelled 'violent' begets a cycle which is both destructive and self-perpetuating, for First Nations women caught within the walls of the institution. Evidently, as pointed out by Sugar and Fox (1990: 470):

they speak for many voices that we are not able to attach a name) and to remind society that life at the Prison for Women was more horrifying than what we heard, saw or read about in the media.

In P4W, everything follows from this label. But the prison regimen that follows serves to *reinforce the violence* that it is *supposedly designed to manage*. *It creates of P4W a place in which it is impossible to heal* (emphasis added).

The maximum security nature of P4W only aggravates and adds further meaning to the use of this code in its application to First Nations women. First Nations women in P4W, due to their refusal to co-operate with **male** guards who ordered them to remove their clothes in the prison population were prejudged as being violent, uncontrollable and unmanageable (Sugar and Fox, 1990: 468).

The pain inflicted on First Nations women who come in conflict with the criminal justice system is very real. This pain is at least partially caused by the inherent racism and corresponding oppression in Canadian society and in the so-called 'justice' system. Moreover, the trivialization and disregard of the unique and inherent cultural perspective of First Nations women should not be tolerated:

Those who assess us [upon entering prison] come from an opposite life - experience. The average case management person is Caucasian, married, has 1 - 2 children, a university degree, is from an upper - middle class background with no comparable experiences to a First Nations women [*sic*] (Schienbein, 1992: 432).

Within P4W, "typical" occurrences affected the prison life of these "typical" First Nations offenders. If one were to ask about the situations faced by these women, one would be told about:

archaic conditions, arbitrary mass punishment, sexism and racial barriers imposed by administration and security classifications that were applied....because, as Aboriginal women, we were seen as a collective, as a *war party*, that

posed a *risk to the good order of the institution* (Sugar and Fox, 1990: 468)(emphasis added).

Most of the First Nations women serving their time in P4W were survivors of sexual abuse, rape and wife battering and their needs fell on deaf ears for, as Sugar and Fox indicated, the only option for treatment for these women could be found at the Kingston Prison for Men (KP). Those who encouraged this treatment at KP ignored that it housed sex offenders, the very perpetrators that were symbolic representatives for the men who had repeatedly and brutally victimised the First Nations women. One must question the benefit of forcing women to accept treatment under such conditions, especially when the treatment would not be advantageous due to its cultural bias. It is not surprising that First Nations women refused to take part in such a treatment program. Because of this refusal, parole applications were not supported because it was claimed that they "didn't address their own treatment needs" (Sugar and Fox, 1990: 469):

The starting point for action lies not in abstract discussions, but in the experiences of the women themselves. An essential recognition: prisons and release from prison are not the starting point Aboriginal women grow up in prison, although the prisons in which they grow up are not the ones to which they are sentenced under law (Sugar and Fox, 1990: 469).

It is essential to note the history of violence that First Nations women³³ bring with them to the institution, notwithstanding the destructive forces at work in P4W. All the studies conducted, although sparse in nature, confirm that all of the First Nations women have been victims of violence at some point before entering the penal system (LaPrairie, 1987a: 104; Sugar and Fox, 1990: 470). Schienbein (1992: 435) expands on this:

The statistics alone tell of a horrific story of the pre-prison lives of these women: 90% of imprisoned Aboriginal women have been physically abused (usually over long periods of time); 69% described violence in their childhoods; 54% were raped or sexually assaulted.

First Nations women must also be treated for their victimization. This abuse is not unilateral in nature, but is instead multifaceted. Many of the women experienced sexual and physical abuse during their early developmental years. However, this abuse was in no way restricted to their 'natural' or birth families, but also transcended across to foster homes and juvenile institutions. The experiences with violence that these women faced are both gruesome and shocking:

. . . rape, regular sexual abuse, the witnessing of murder, watching our mother repeatedly beaten, beatings in juvenile detention centers at the hands of staff and other children (Sugar and Fox, 1990: 470).

For many, this childhood violence became a vicious cycle that did not end at the onset of adulthood. Rather, the violence became an ongoing feature of life.³⁴ "The violence was simply the continuation of childhood experiences" (Sugar and Fox, 1990: 470).

As concurred with by LaPrairie (1987b: 108), Sugar and Fox (1990: 473) note that:

. . . usually, women are there because of men. The violence of which we are victims is not occasional or temporary, the violence we have experienced has typically been violence at the hands of men. There is no accidental relationship

³³ Elizabeth Comack (1996) in her book entitled, *Women in Trouble: Connecting Women's Law Violations to their Histories of Abuse*, discusses this issue for women offenders more generally.

³⁴ For an excellent example of this very situation, read the autobiographical account of Yvonne Johnson, entitled *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman*. She is currently serving a life sentence for murder at the *Healing Lodge*.

between our convictions for violent offences and our histories as victims. As victims we carry the burden of memories: of pain inflicted on us, of violence done to us before our eyes to those we loved, of rape, of sexual assault, of beatings, of death. For us, violence has begotten violence: our contained hatred and rage has been concentrated in an explosion that has left us with yet more memories to scar and mark us. . . .

Incarcerated for these crimes of 'self-defence', First Nations women made an attempt to escape the seemingly endless world of violence by employing self-destructive methods. Alcohol abuse or addiction to prescription drugs provided in the institution were just as common. However, it was the slashings³⁵ that took place that illustrated the inner turmoil:

We become so *phucking* numb from the incredible *b/sh* we are exposed to: trying to see a case management officer to get a call to our children is a major, major event. It is no wonder that so many of us cut our throats, lacerate our bodies, hang ourselves. It is no wonder that we need to identify our pain onto our physical bodies, because our whole lives have been filled with incredible pain and traumatizing experiences-psyhic pain, physical pain, spiritual pain (Sugar, 1989: 89) (emphasis in original).

Thus, every part of prison existence for First Nations women has a particular historical context that defines their situation. "It is experienced through the eyes and feelings that are *Female, Aboriginal, and Imprisoned*" (Sugar and Fox, 1990: 469) (emphasis added). With this as a reference point, one can take the position that nothing that is done in prison with the goal of the 'betterment' of the daily psychological mind - sets of these women, can, to any degree, heal their 'before-prison' experiences.

³⁵ This method of self-mutilation is not a suicide attempt, but a cry for help; and attempt at relieving the tension, anger and physical pain that eats away at their insides

Prison cannot remedy the problem of the poverty of the reserves. It cannot deal with immediate or historical memories of the genocide that Europeans worked upon our people. It cannot remedy violence, alcohol abuse, sexual assault during childhood, rape and other violence Aboriginal women experience at the hands of men. Prison cannot heal the past abuse of foster homes, or the indifference and racism of Canada's justice system in its dealings with Aboriginal people (Sugar and Fox, 1990: 469).

Some might question why First Nations communities are not facilitating the development of healing programs to address these problems prior to imprisonment. It is not that simple a task. The loss of self-identity, abuse, stress, lack of self-determination and so forth have become the reality of First Nations individuals. The poverty of First Nations communities and lack of self-determination do not allow for the availability of programs and services geared towards healing. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that the numbers of First Nations peoples who are qualified to assist in the healing process and counsel community members is low as a result of the low number of First Nations peoples who successfully complete their education.

First Nations peoples' understanding of the criminal justice system and all its appendages (the police, the courts, the laws and the prisons themselves) is set by lifetimes that have been structured and defined by racism. What must be comprehended is that this racism is not solely set by actions of overt racism. Instead, the racism is much more extensive than Canadian society is willing to admit to:

Culturally, economically and as a people we have been oppressed and pushed aside by whites. We were sent to live on reserves that denied us a livelihood, controlled us with rules that we did not set, and made us depend on services we could not provide for ourselves. The Indian Agent and the police are for us administrators of oppressive

regimes whose authority we resent and deny. Like other peoples around the world who live under illegitimate political structures, we learn that *the rules imposed by this authority exist to be broken, that they are not our ways*, that they are only the outside and not the inside measure of the way a person should act. As children, we are taught to fear white authority because of the punishment it could enforce. Faced with institutional neglect and overt racism, our feelings about white authority even before we encountered the criminal justice system mixed passive distrust and active hatred (Sugar and Fox, 1990: 475) (emphasis added).

Sugar and Fox are quick to add that this blatant mistrust of white authority figures does not stop at the police and the like. Mistrust extends to people who are supposed to provide the women with assistance while they are incarcerated, such as case management officers, parole officers and social workers (1990: 475).

It is an absurd, *phucking* joke to think that the criminal *just-us* system with their residential care, treatment, programming, counseling and mental health programs are specifically designed programs to meet the needs of Native women when we have never had an equal footing in the case management strategic planning sessions that take place. The bureaucracy and paper pushing outweighs the importance of listening to what the Native woman says she needs (Sugar, 1989: 89)(original emphasis).

Spirituality is an integral part of First Nations peoples' cultures, who they are, and in some cases, *how* they define themselves. The holistic world-view of First Nations cultures does not allow or make room for the separation of the physical from the spiritual. A balance must be maintained to be in harmony with oneself and the rest of the world. Unfortunately, due to the linear mental processes and methods of viewing the world held by Euro-Westerners, (the importance of) First Nations spirituality was not understood or

respected at P4W. This lack of cultural sensitivity has resulted in the almost complete unavailability of services to assist in the healing of First Nations women.

Zellerer (1992: 257) notes that within the criminal justice system, a policy exists that deals specifically with the issue of religion and spirituality. However, the rhetoric of Corrections Canada versus the practise at P4W was largely contradictory. And one might argue that this continues at the *Healing Lodge*. "The *cultural differences* of First Nations offenders are not being fully respected nor are they being properly addressed" (Zellerer, 1992: 257) (emphasis added). The first core value of the Mission Statement that guides Corrections Canada (1997: 4) proclaims, "We respect the dignity of individuals, the rights of all members of society, and the potential for human growth and development." This core value includes the strategic objective "To respect the social, cultural and religious differences of the individual offenders and to ensure that the needs of female and First Nations offenders are addressed" (1997: 9). CSC felt that it needed to proceed a step further in this area. As a result, several *Commissioner's Directives* were implemented: C.D. #702, entitled Aboriginal Offender Programs; C. D. # 750, entitled "Religious Services and Programs" and C.D. # 705 which was enacted in 1985. C. D. #705 is of particular interest:

To ensure recognition of the spiritual dimension of life by actively encouraging inmates to express their spirituality and exercise their religion when this does not affect the good order of the institution; to ministry to inmates, staff and families (Zellerer, 1992: 257).

The positive spirit of this directive is undermined by the caveat, "when this does not affect the good order of the institution." Conceding that substantial discretionary powers exist with correctional officers, and that most usually have little or no understanding of

First Nations cultures, the level of 'encouragement' for the exercise and practice of spirituality is highly suspect.

Underscoring the problems that exist with the Commissioner's Directives, one can also look to section 83(1) of the *CCRA*. This section reinforces the notion that CSC places First Nations spirituality at the level of a religion instead of viewing it as a means to healing. Section 83(1) states: "[f]or greater certainty, aboriginal [sic] spirituality and aboriginal spiritual leaders and elders have the same status as other religions and other religious leaders." Taken at face value, this would indicate that First Nations elders are no different from Christian chaplains, Jewish rabbis, or any other religious figure-head, and that their roles within the correctional facility are exactly the same. This is an misguided premise and it is unclear how *Okimaw Ohci* will come to terms with this section, as no measures have been taken to alter this federal legislation. Although *Okimaw Ohci* is mandated to provide traditional spiritual ceremonies and teachings, if Elders are viewed as acting in the same capacity as Chaplains, and section 83(1) has not been amended, will the Eskwewuk who practice Christianity and require the services of a chaplain take precedence over those women who require the spiritual ceremonies of an Elder? First Nations spirituality (such as a sweatlodge ceremony) cannot be completed in one hour on Sunday. Preparation for such a ceremony requires substantial time, preparation, and the use of the outdoors.

First Nations' spirituality suffers greatly from lack of appreciation of its significance on the part of Euro-Westerners. The Manitoba Justice Inquiry (1991: 444) indicated that although First Nations spirituality in federal institutions receives more recognition than provincial penal institutions, unreasonable limits are imposed:

At times when I'd burn my medicine, when we had sweetgrass smuggled in to us because sometimes it was seen as contraband, the sweet smell of the earth would create a safe feeling, a feeling of being alive even though the cage represented a coffin, the prison a gravestone, and my sisters walking dead people. Those medicines were what connected me as a spirit child (Hamilton and Sinclair, 1991: 467).

The Manitoba Justice Inquiry (1991: 443-444) pointed out that "81% of Aboriginal inmates reported that they felt that Aboriginal spirituality was not respected in their institution." They also discovered (1991: 444- 445) that some institutions provide no spiritual services whatsoever, or when programs are offered, they are done so with the imposition of unreasonable limitations. More disheartening, however, were the personal accounts given to the Inquiry by offenders stating that sacred objects were mishandled and broken by staff, of sacred spaces being intruded upon during ceremonies, or prisoners being disciplined for trying to follow traditional ways.

It is important to recall that freedom of religion is a fundamental right guaranteed by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and the actions of the prison guards and their superiors to covertly or overtly deny First Nations spirituality infringed on their rights. Just as other prisoners are permitted their religious ceremonies, so must First Nations women. In other words, equal treatment is not synonymous with same treatment. The First Nations belief that the mind, body and soul are inter-related leads to the belief that one cannot heal without the others also being affected. P4W does not, by nature of its imposition by a totally different culture, allow for this. This is one of the key aspects that *Okimaw Ohci* is addressing, and that all programs and policies must be geared to address.

Serious problems were faced by First Nations women in P4W due to the infringement of spiritual practices. In an eighteen month period, five First Nations women took their own lives and a sixth remained in critical condition after such an attempt. "The racist denial of the native sisterhood's spiritual rights/rites and their access to trusted Native elders" has been put forth as one explanation for these tragic occurrences (Leonard Peltier Defence Committee, 1991: np).³⁶ Furthermore, the Defence Committee spoke out against the fact that:

Native women to this day are being denied the access to elders and the spiritual ceremonies which are available to the white women. Their's is a long struggle against both white and male supremacy (1991: np).

Healing and spirituality progress along a continuum. With all counselling services, a program could be developed whereby individuals at different levels of need could be provided with services that matched those needs. Even though some First Nations peoples enter the justice system with no knowledge of their culture and its methods of healing, and who perhaps have no desire to ever learn, these services must be available for those who wish to learn and experience their culture for the first time. This will be given greater attention in the *West Door* (Chapter Three).

Sugar and Fox (1990a : 10) explain why P4W was not an institution that encouraged the rehabilitation of First Nations women:

Not only are we women who are both victims and initiators of violence, but we are also members of the First Nations,

³⁶ It is important to add a qualifier to this assertion, in that it is not possible to make such a causal link between the infringement of spiritual practices and suicide. It is not known if the five women who committed suicide were dealing with other, unrelated issues. In fact, much of the research conducted on suicide notes that there is often a multitude of factors involved (see Durkheim (1951) *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*) for an in-depth examination and explanation of suicide.

the survivors of people now forced to subsist on the margins of the lands where [we once] lived freely.

Sugar and Fox (1990a: 10) added that "the regime of P4W is not one under which these things can be healed."

For First Nations women, P4W was an extension of their lives on the outside. Thus, it was virtually impossible to argue that any healing could occur. What P4W offered was more of the mistrusted white authority that First Nations women experienced as sexist, racist and violent:

Prisons are, then, one more focus for the pain and rage we carry. For us, prison rules have the same illegitimacy as the oppressive rules under which we grew up. Those few "helping" services in prison that are intended to heal are delivered in ways that are culturally inappropriate to us as women and as Aboriginal people. Physicians, psychiatrists, and psychologists are typically white and male. How can we be healed by those who symbolize the worst experiences of our past? . . . This is why we refuse to become involved, and then are further punished because we fail to seek treatment (Sugar and Fox, 1990: 476-477).

The life experiences of First Nations women in conflict with a white criminal justice system that did not assist or promote their "healing" spoke strongly to the necessity of developing special treatment programs to meet these needs:

The critical difference is racism. We are born into it and spend our lives facing it. . . . The effect is violence, violence against us, and in turn our own violence. *The solution is healing: healing through traditional ceremonies, support, understanding and the compassion that will empower Aboriginal women to the betterment of ourselves, our families and our communities . . .* Existing programs cannot reach us, cannot surmount the barriers of mistrust that racism has built. It is only Aboriginal people who can truly know and understand our experience . . . who can

instill pride and self-esteem lost through the destructive experiences of racism. . . . implementation of this healing process must be premised on our need, the need to heal and walk in balance (Sugar and Fox, 1990: 482) (emphasis added).

A dramatic and pivotal event at took place P4W. Not only did this even permit Canadians to acquire first-hand knowledge of life at P4W, it reaffirmed the notion that the construction of the *Healing Lodge* (as well as the other regional facilities) was a mandatory step for Corrections officials. A Fifth Estate special presentation entitled "The Ultimate Response" (Faith, 1995: 91) aired on February 21, 1995. Eight women (four of whom where First Nations) were severely brutalized and terrorized. Stripped naked by the "riot squad" -six men from the near-by Kingston Penitentiary for Men- the women were harassed for hours while all the while "this nightmarish event [is being] observed by a bank of silent witnesses, primarily male staff who are later identified by CSC as maintenance workers, security and case management administrators, the prison physician, then-warden Mary Cassidy and her deputy assistant wardens" (Faith, 1995: 92-93). That this all occurred, "while the cameras were rolling," raises the frightful question that was stated somewhat rhetorically by a prisoner no longer at P4W: "What happens when the cameras aren't rolling?"

A New Paradigm for Corrections: A Move to a Culturally Sensitive Correctional Institution

. . . . the place I would start thinking about the Task Force is that name that we gave the report - Creating Choices. That was, I think, one of the fundamental principles . . . Our belief was that women in prison were in the same position as women in society . . . they were just at the further end of the spectrum . . . women didn't need to be corrected or rehabilitated. What they had never had in their life was meaningful choices and that if

you were going to talk about redoing prisons, then what you had to do was to recreate a structure that provided women the opportunity to make choices and hopefully then they would choose to make better choices than the choices that got them into trouble in the first place . . . For Aboriginal women, that then became meaningful in a different sense . . . What Aboriginal women didn't want was to become just another add-on to the women's system and when we explained it that way, it could be understood so I think that for Aboriginal women, the whole notion of creating choices is even more important (Trish Monture, as cited in Palumbo and Palumbo, 1992: 5).

To compensate for the inadequacies and failures of P4W, *Creating Choices: The Report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women* (conducted in 1989) recommended that it be closed and replaced with five regional and 'treatment' centres by the year 1994 (Schienbein, 1992: 427). One of these treatment centres would be an 'Aboriginal' Healing Lodge¹⁷ located near Maple Creek, Saskatchewan (Schienbein, 1992: 427). Moreover, it would be built on land belonging to the Nekeaneet Reserve just outside Maple Creek (Morin, 1993, 23).

The most important premise underlying its construction was that it be a place *of* and *for* healing; where First Nations women would receive culturally appropriate and sensitive help in re-establishing harmony in their lives and be assisted in returning to their communities (reserve or urban). However, a problem embedded in this lies in the conceptualisation and successful operationalization of *healing* within the correctional context. Healing is not an objective or predictive phenomenon; nor is it uni-dimensional. Progress is individualistic and subject to set-backs. It occurs on a continuum that does not perpetually move forward. Furthermore, as previously stated, healing continues to assume a very different meaning in First Nations cultures as compared to non-First

¹⁷ Other "Healing Lodges" or "Healing Centres" existed in Canada prior to the construction of this facility, although they were not connected to CSC. Since the construction of this facility, however, other correctional Healing Centres have come into being, for both men and women (such as one in Hobbema, for men, and another in Manitoba, for women).

Nations cultures. The philosophy behind the concept of healing can be defined as that which “re-establish[es] the balance among the various aspects of self-physical, emotional, cognitive and spiritual” (Ristock and Pennell, 1996: 26)..

The difficulty with the concept of healing lies in the current methodology for its recognition. The determination and definition of whether or not one has been ‘rehabilitated’ is at the discretion of the National Parole Board of Canada (NPBC). The basis for such a diagnosis is not any holistic philosophy or understanding of the level of internal healing the woman has managed to achieve. Instead, the NPBC relies on information about the number of hours spent in program participation and the ability to successfully complete different program components. Women serving their sentences at the *Healing Lodge* are subject to the same decision-making strategies employed for all other correctional facilities. In essence, the Parole Board utilises a rationality, philosophy and value system that is incongruous to that embraced by the *Healing Lodge*. This is in addition to the lack of knowledge and understanding members of the Parole Board hold in relation to First Nations’ cultures. A realisation that the woman may not be ready for full or unconditional release at the time set for her is imperative. Even though it is asserted that

[n]o one can tell another how to achieve such a balance.
Thus, the *responsibility of the helpers is to ‘give away’
their knowledge, not to exercise it even on behalf of others.*
Unlike European-based approaches to healing, this
approach is based on **non-interference**: sharing knowledge
without diagnosing or offering prescriptions for cures
(Ristock and Pennell, 1996: 26) (emphasis added).

However, it is intrinsic to the current structure of the Parole Board to employ professionals whose purpose it is to diagnose cures and exercise their knowledge to

determine the present and future of an offender. The desire and insatiable *need* Corrections has to control and interfere in the course of healing is one of several variables that will negatively affect the success of the healing process for women at the *Lodge*.

Similarly, the legislation outlined in the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (1995), that dictates the release of all offenders from correctional facilities, suffers from misunderstandings of conditions faced in First Nations' communities. Located in this piece of legislation are occasional references to First Nations' offenders that could serve to hinder the opportunity for successful reintegration to the community. Section 55 of the *CCRA*³⁸, in particular, relates to the consumption of alcohol and/or drugs of a parolee. Due to the endemic abuse of alcohol and drugs in many First Nations communities, to include such a stipulation almost guarantees that the women will face considerable problems with successful reintegration. The wording of this section enables significant discretion on the part of parole officers. The use of the terminology "reasonable grounds to suspect" opens up a Pandora's box for First Nations women. This is not to say that the Parole Board should sanction the unfettered consumption of alcohol or drugs by First Nations women once they are back in their communities. However, there is a *sine qua*

³⁸

Corrections and Conditional Release Act, 1995

55. Subject to section 56 and subsection 57 (2), a staff member or any other person so authorized by the Service, may demand that an offender submit to urinalysis

(a) at once, where the staff member or other authorized person has reasonable grounds to suspect that the offender has breached any condition of a temporary absence, work release, parole or statutory release that requires abstention from alcohol or drugs, in order to monitor the offender's compliance with that condition; or

(b) at regular intervals, in order to monitor the offender's compliance with any condition of a temporary absence, work release, parole or statutory release that requires

non that alcoholism and other substance abuse are endemic in the majority of First Nations communities. Without sensitivity to this, the end result could be the return of the woman to the institution when other solutions, more conducive to the overall paradigm of healing, could be selected.

The *CCRA*, in section 76, also states that CSC shall "provide a range of programs designed to address the needs of [Aboriginal] offenders and contribute to their successful reintegration into the community" (*CCRA*, 1992: 33). Notwithstanding the importance of viewing correctional programs as the first step in a long career of programming and counselling services, they must also carry on outside the walls of the institution. In short, community services must be made available and viewed as part of this range of programs. If nothing exists for the women once discharged, any progress made behind the walls of the institution is almost futile. This principle and the ensuing responsibility of Corrections is addressed through section 81 of the *CCRA*³⁹, yet anything resembling this has failed to come to fruition in First Nations communities⁴⁰. Moreover, the nature of programming to be delivered in the community--one of the factors employed to assess release readiness' -- is a dead end street for many. Wendy Sandy of the *Indian Homemakers Association of British Columbia* (July, 1996), confirmed that once a First Nations woman is released from prison, there is little, if any, community support or

abstention from alcohol or drugs.

³⁹ 81 (1) The Minister, or a person authorized by the Minister may enter into an agreement with an aboriginal community for the provision of correctional services to aboriginal offenders and for payment by the Minister, or by a person authorised by the Minister, in respect of provision of those services.

⁴⁰ In the summer of 1997 I worked with the Sto:lo Nation in Chilliwack, B.C. in researching the capability and desire of the twelve communities to construct a healing centre for their offenders. In fact, it was one of the first attempts at creating a Section 81 agreement between the federal government. As of November 1999, the community continues to debate the feasibility of such an agreement. As far as the author is aware, no community has entered into a Section 81 agreement with the government.

services available to help with the progress made in jail. This lack of continuity in services has the effect of re-victimizing the newly released offender. Programs and services that are substantive in nature cannot be provided only within the *Healing Lodge*. The focus on healing that is paramount at the *Lodge* must continue in collaboration with the community. Counselling for alcohol and drug abuse (for example) must continue, and this abuse should not be the cause of the woman's return to prison. The true issue of justice in a democratic society is not that subsystems should be co-ordinated, but that end-results inhere to the benefits of society instead of the benefit of the administrator (Clark, 1984; 86).

The gap between programs provided in *Okimaw Ohci* and those found within First Nations communities cannot be ignored. The grand assumption is made that once released, culturally relevant and timely programs will be found within the community. According to Wendy Sandy (Personal Communication, July 1996), this is not the reality. Lawrence (as cited in LaPrairie, 1992b: 294) agrees:

It is unrealistic to expect offenders to solve problems with substance abuse, employment and education absent from community changes in reducing the source of those problems, and unless community services and resources are provided.

Knowing that programs are in place to facilitate reintegration to one's own, or adoptive, community will assist these women with an already formidable transition. The availability of programming will ensure that the First Nations women are not simply removed from the institution and "dropped" in a foreign or hostile community. Even here, other considerations arise that all governmental agencies fail to even consider. First, the home communities of the women being released from the *Healing Lodge* may

not want them back, be it for the crime committed, or other more personal reasons. This is based on the premise that the woman is returning to a reserve community as opposed to an urban community. Moreover, encouraging a woman to return to her home (reserve) community (as suggested by *Creating Choices*) if she has been absent for most of her life will not succeed either. It fails to acknowledge the possibility of ties to a different community. Furthermore, it does not recognize the woman who has no desire to return to a First Nations community or her willingness to become a member of another community who is likewise willing to 'adopt' her. These issues must be addressed.

Policy Implications of the *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge*

Pal (1989: 4) defines public policy as “a course of action or inaction chosen by public authorities to address a given problem or interrelated set of problems.” In short, although some might perceive policy to be indicative of action, this is not always the case. In fact, “[r]efraining from action, waiting, leaving things as they are, can all be plausible policy options” (Pal, 1989: 9). However, a different texture develops when “policies are developed by authorities who wield coercive power” (Pal, 1989: 6-7). Illustrative of this environment is the current situation of First Nations female offenders and the verbalised goals of Corrections, by the construction of the *Healing Lodge*, to promote healing and successful community reintegration. The Solicitor General of Canada and Commissioner of Corrections must ensure that all necessary steps are taken to avoid status quo policies and continuation of colonialist modes of thought. In that Pal (1989: ix) notes, “[p]olicy analysis, as a part of the more general process of problem solving, is thus marked by creative and imaginative solutions as it is by mastery of technical detail.” Corrections staff must not be afraid to attempt to follow such a creative or unconventional path in its search for solutions to the discordant policies within the area of First Nations criminal justice.

One of the most important variables in the definition of a particular policy problem is the statement of clear goals. These goals define what the policy hopes to achieve in the future--and it is the success of achieving these goals that lays the foundation for future evaluation. Yet, policy cannot hope to move forward without clear knowledge of the past. This exercise in rationality (Ekstedt, 1987: 70) is difficult to

apply when contemplating the history of Canadian correctional policy for First Nations peoples. If we concede that the policy currently exemplified by the *Lodge* is “redistributive,” (Lowri, as cited in Pal, 1989:120), as it “involve[s] the largest categories of actors, having impacts at the level of social classes since they demand transfer from the rich to the poor,” some level of understanding is promoted.

Correctional policies of the past do not lead to a true redistributive policy for First Nations offenders. It is therefore difficult to accurately determine the direction of Canadian First Nations corrections policy. In that expectations held throughout any process are normally determined by the history of government action (Clark, 1984: 104: Pal, 1989: 120), if the values and assumptions espoused in past Correctional policies have remained unchanged, the tenacity of the recent shift will be hard to measure. A shift in very nature of current authoritarian state policies and practices is necessary

As social values are malleable to social change and social movements, Geoffery York (1990) among others, notes that policies must be developed that are reflective of these values. In this way, “[p]olicies, . . . become expressions of social values either directly or indirectly” (Ekstedt and Griffiths, 1988: 102). The power of policies related to corrections must not be taken lightly (Ekstedt and Griffiths, 1988). If the short or long term repercussions of a policy are not carefully considered, it can open a Pandora’s box that becomes very difficult to close.

Policy making should therefore not be taken lightly. . . .
Policy which is developed primarily for the purpose of solving an immediate maintenance problem, without attention to the social purpose which that policy is intended to support will often produce a confusing and counter productive result at the point of its implementation (Ekstedt and Griffiths, 1988: 103).

Failure to account for this can erupt into a “crisis-centred management” approach (Bartollas and Miller, 1978, as cited in Ekstedt and Griffiths, 1988: 104) and is evidenced through *Okimaw Ohci* for two reasons: first, the failure to revise and address correctional policies that are “out of sphere” with spirit and intentions of the *Healing Lodge*; second, the *Lodge* has not completely shed itself of the problematics evident at the Prison for Women.

Where Rhetoric and Practice Collide

The policies of the *Healing Lodge* can be examined through various avenues: an examination of its ‘role statement,’ principles and objectives;⁴¹ programming; training, the use of Elders; and the manner in which women are “selected” to attend the *Lodge*. According to a document provided by the Correctional Service of Canada (nd: 8), the role of the *Healing Lodge* is defined as follows:

The Healing Lodge will facilitate [a] new approach and will assist Aboriginal women in maintaining contact with their families, home communities and supportive services. The Healing Lodge will, among other things, provide an environment which is conducive to assisting Aboriginal women as they begin their own *individual healing process* (emphasis added).

To fulfil this role, while maintaining the integrity of the guiding principles discussed in *Creating Choices*, additional principles are promoted. They can be viewed as the cornerstones of the *Healing Lodge*:

⁴¹These principles and objectives were based on the five guiding principles outlined in *Creating Choices*: a) empowerment; b) meaningful and responsible choices; c) respect and dignity; d) a supportive environment; and e) shared responsibility.

- a safe place for Aboriginal women offenders;
- a caring attitude towards self, family and community;
- a belief in *individual plans* for women that they themselves help develop (emphasis added);
- an understanding of the transitory aspects of Aboriginal life;
- an appreciation of the healing role of children who are closer to the spirit world;
- pride in surviving difficult backgrounds and personal experiences (CSC, nd: 8).

Based on these principles, several specific objectives were established for the *Healing Lodge*. The objectives highlight several policy areas, and if examined critically also raise several operational questions.

Specific Objectives of the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge

1. To provide a correctional healing model based on Aboriginal teachings.
2. To teach and practice various ceremonies related to Spiritual and Cultural well-being.
3. To share the oral teachings.
4. To create a culturally responsive model based on the needs of Aboriginal women in order to assist in their successful return to society.
5. To create an environment free of racism, sexism and classism.
6. To create an internal community committed in principle and practice to the promotion of wellness-mental, spiritual, physical and emotional.
7. To promote respect and understanding of self and others.
8. To create an environment in which Aboriginal women can assume/continue an active parental role with their children.
9. To provide an opportunity for harvesting and growing of herbs, plants and organically grown produce.
10. To facilitate conditional release at the earliest possible time by addressing those aspects which relate to why women are involved in crime.
11. To create and maintain partnerships with the community and provide a setting for shared learning experiences.

12. To develop the Healing Lodge as a model for other correctional based facilities, and will, whenever possible, share their expertise in staff training models and unique programs with interested parties at both the National and International levels (CSC, nd: 9).

Comparing the language of these objectives with the language of the guiding principles, one of the key problems when addressing the needs of First Nations peoples generally, and the Eskwewuk at the *Healing Lodge* specifically comes to light. Despite the focus on a “culturally appropriate” and respectful environment, there is still a conflict between meeting needs of the *individual* Eskwewuk versus the needs of the Eskwewuk *collectively*. The dilemma arises when one recognizes that First Nations cultures are heterogeneous. Although some similarities and borrowing of traditions exists among groups, to do justice to the focus on “cultural appropriateness” it is necessary to move away from a ‘pan-Indianism’ approach. LaPrairie (1996: iv) concurs: “. . . . in developing and implementing programs for aboriginal inmates in their correctional institutions, (t)he emphasis on the cultural and spiritual has emphasized group rather than the individual approach.” If it is true that the *Healing Lodge* is placing emphasis on the collective, by virtue of providing cultural teachings from only specific groups, it is guilty of maintaining the correctional policies and practices of the past.

Programming

It is only Aboriginal people who can design and deliver programs that will address our needs and that we can trust. It is only Aboriginal people who can truly know and understand our experience. It is only Aboriginal people who can instill pride and self-esteem lost through the destructive experiences of racism. We cry out for a meaningful healing process that will have a real impact on our lives, but the objectives and implementation of this healing process must be premised on our need to heal and walk in balance.

(Sugar and Fox, 1989: 482)

Programming is a key component of the correctional enterprise. Ekstedt and Jackson (1997: 34) note that correctional programs for “the kept” are organized into several categories: security classification, ethnicity, sex, specific offences and so forth. The *Healing Lodge*, by virtue of these criteria and section 76 of the *CCRA*, can be classified as a ‘correctional ‘program.’ Specifically, it is what Ekstedt and Jackson (1997: 128) refer to as “program by type.”⁴² The programs provided at the *Healing Lodge* can be classified in a similar manner.

One must consider several questions in reviewing the actual programs provided at *Okimaw Ohci* to meet the needs of the Eskwewuk. A justice proposal prepared by the Sandy Lake First Nation aptly summarizes a primary concern:

Probably one of the most serious gaps in the system is the different perception of wrongdoing and how to best treat it. In the non-Indian community, committing a crime seems to mean that the individual is a *bad person* and therefore must be punished . . . The Indian communities view a wrongdoing as a *misbehaviour which requires*

⁴² The authors point out that “[p]rograms by offender type’ can also be thought of in terms of ‘special needs.’” (Ekstedt and Jackson, 1997: 128). In that the *Healing Lodge* is specifically mandated to assist First Nations women, and these individuals are recognized as having “special needs,” it justifies such a label.

teaching or an illness which requires healing” (as cited in Ross, 1996: 5)(original emphasis).

Determining the “what works” question has LaPrairie (1996: iv) suggesting an examination of several programming principles: “proper administration and implementation of programs; a sound conceptual model of criminality; recognition of individual differences; targeting criminogenic needs; and the style and mode of treatment must correspond to the learning characteristics of offenders.” Using these principles as a guide, questions arise when determining the efficacy of program delivery at the *Healing Lodge*.

First, it is unknown, based on the literature reviewed, whether there will be a role for the provision of the standard “core programming”⁴³ at the *Lodge in addition to* the provision of ‘culturally relevant’ programming. However, upon a closer examination of the programs currently provided at federal institutions and those available at *Okimaw Ohci*, it is unclear how different they will be or in what manner they will be organized to account for the cultural dynamics of the Eskwewuk.

The following tables compare the seven core programs found in all correctional and community settings and those that will be provided at the *Healing Lodge*.

⁴³ Core programs are provided to offenders to promote and facilitate long-lasting changes in the lifestyles and choices made by offenders that contribute to their continued criminal activity.

Table 1 Core Programs Currently Provided in Correctional Institutions

Core Program	Program Description
Motivational Program	Helps offenders recognize that change is possible and worthwhile, and how to overcome the barriers they face when making changes.
Cognitive Skills Program	Provides the skills to avoid crime such as problem solving, decision-making, consideration of options and consequences.
Family Violence Program	Identifies the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships, the precursors to violent behaviour, and develop strategies to avoid relapse.
Substance Abuse Program	Helps offenders identify the nature, causes and consequences of their addiction, and assists with an understanding of what is necessary for recovery.
Anger Management Program	Helps offenders recognize the differences between anger and violence, uncover the sources of their anger (personal triggers), and identify resolutions that are non-violent.
Employment/Housing/Financial Management Program	Assists offenders prepare for finding a job, seeking and obtaining accommodations, and manage their income.

Sex Offender Program

Teaches offenders about sexuality, the impact and consequences of the abuse on victims, the cycle of offending, and relapse prevention

Compiled from Ministry of Attorney General (1998). *Directing Change, the strategic plan for adult corrections and family justice services 1998-2001* Victoria: Queen's Printer, p.7

Table 2 Programs and Services Provided at the *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge*

Program	Program Description
Five week Drug and Alcohol Treatment Program (SOAAR)	
Relapse Prevention	
Education	Ongoing: literacy, computer skills, university programs through the Saskatchewan Communications Network.
Work Programs	Ongoing: Library, cleaning, kitchen maintenance, peer tutoring, canteen, sewing/crafts, beauty salon, craft co-ordination, and ceramics. ⁴⁴
AA Meetings	At the <i>Lodge</i> and in the community
Cognitive Learning Skills	

⁴⁴ Unfortunately, these are all stereotypically "female" occupations. Based on the already low employment rate and proliferation of First Nations women in menial jobs, one must question the choice of jobs provided in work programs at the *Lodge*.

Life Skills Coach Training

Focuses on modifying negative behaviours to positive behaviours through the use of peer pressure. Not only will enable participants to deal with the past and work towards a positive future, it will also enable participants to obtain certification as a Life Skills Coach.

Workshops

Topics such as: Eating Disorders, AIDS, Azimuth Theatre, Assertiveness, Conflict Resolution, Laughter, Relationships, Meeting and Committee work, Team Building, Trust Building, Reflexology, Stress Management.

Leisure Activities

Exercise, crafts, sports, sewing, music, ceramics, pottery.

Nobody's Perfect

Aboriginal Parenting Skills

Positive Emotions

Four components: a) Anger Management; b) Self Awareness; c) Women and Violence; d) Survivors of Sexual Violence

Mother/Child Program

To assist the women deal with their anxiety, maintain strong relationships with their children and become more effective parents; letter-writing, phone calls, making gifts
Residency (for children between the ages of 1-4) and visiting options. Also includes parent support groups, grief/separation counselling, family counselling, Baby-sitting certification courses, childcare worker training, Children of Abused and Violent Families, Communicable Disease Control.

First Aid/CPR Certification

Food Handling and Safety Certification

Aboriginal Specific Programs

Language Studies; Teaching on the traditional roles and responsibilities of Aboriginal women, various customs and the importance and significance of them, teachings about traditional medicines and the identification of plants, roots, herbs, etc., sweat lodge ceremonies, sacred circle, traditional dancing.

Compiled from, Correctional Service of Canada (nd). *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge*. p. 3-4, 15.

Although the literature pertaining to the operations and program orientation of the *Healing Lodge* would emphasize a holistic approach, focus on traditional teachings and employ elders to “provide spiritual support, guidance and counseling to the women” (CSC, nd.; 5), it is unclear how these programs address the different cultural needs of the Eskwewuk. This problem exists on two separate levels. First, since the *Healing Lodge* admits women from all regions of Canada, it must provide the teachings and traditions from all of these Nations to fulfil its mandate of “cultural relevance.” Second, and of equal importance, the “cultural profile” (Waldram, 1997) of the Eskwewuk must be taken into account. In other words, are the Eskwewuk ‘traditional,’ ‘bi-cultural,’ or assimilated? What effect will this have on the delivery of programming? The various permutations of cultural profiles and cultural groups will affect the delivery, content, length and size of each available program. Add to this another variable: the attendance of

non-First Nations women at the *Healing Lodge*, and the problems are greatly confounded. If the focus of the *Lodge* is on the individual needs of each Eskwewuk, compromises will inherently arise if cultural profiles, cultural groups and the presence of non-First Nations women are accounted for. This raises the issue of whether it is possible to adequately deliver programs that meet the needs of each group of women simultaneously. If this cannot be done, it begs the question whether criteria are required to determine if a priority system should be established. These concerns must also be framed within the context of fiscal issues. If a particular program will only accommodate two individuals, it will need to be decided whether or not it is fiscally responsible to provide the staffing and other resources or if accountability demands that the program be post-poned or cancelled. Yet, if the focus of the *Lodge* is to remain on healing, it is questionable whether these should even be at issue.⁴⁵ Patricia Monture-OKanee and Mary Ellen Turpel (as cited in Giokas, 1992; 16) provide a succinct response to this question:

What must be remembered as we begin to face this new challenge together is that the shape of the answer is not singular. *There is no single answer that will speak to the diversity of experience, geography and culture of aboriginal people . . .* (emphasis added).

This is to acknowledge that differences must be accounted for in the delivery of programs. Failure to account for the differences could go against the very principles and policies espoused by the *Lodge* and demanded by *Creating Choices*.

⁴⁵ It is important not to forget that a primary rationale of the government for maintaining the status quo, and keeping the Prison for Women open amidst all the calls for its closure and the construction of regional facilities was that the number of female offenders did not warrant such a move.

The emphasis and importance of Elders in the daily operations of *Okimaw Ohci* raises similar concerns when contemplating programming, as well as several others. It is to this that we now turn.

Elders

In the past, Elders held a place of importance in First Nations communities. Recognition of their knowledge, respect of their wisdom, and their ability to counsel their people during times of hardship cemented their place in the community. Unfortunately, due to colonialism, the change in social structures and the disharmony, hopelessness and disempowerment of First Nations peoples, the “role of Elders in teaching and promoting harmony in communities is much less clear” (LaPrairie, 1996: 66). Although the situation is slowly changing, the respect bestowed on Elders in the past often no longer exists. Many times, the Elders of a community are also the same individuals who have perpetrated violence on members of their community, lost the knowledge about traditional ways and become embroiled in issues of political patronage with Band Councils (Mary, Sto:lo Elder, Personal Communication, 1996). Although not all Elders can or should be condemned to this category, the reliance and importance of Elders to the *Healing Lodge* requires an acknowledgement of this truth.

Adding to the lack of respect bestowed on some Elders lies in the negotiation of who is regarded as an Elder. Waldram (1997:109) states that “the status of ‘healer’ or ‘Elder’ is ambiguous and never clearly defined.” Although the general consensus of who is accepted as an Elder is determined by the community, there are instances whereby an

individual will refer to themselves as an “Elder” without the consensus or respect of the community.⁴⁶

Age can also be an issue for some individuals. Not all Elders are old, and in fact, many are often quite young (Waldram, 1997). This could create problems for the Eskwewuk at *Okimaw Ohci* if they believe that a person who is younger than fifty or sixty should not have such a title, or assume such a role. The Eskwewuk may believe in the general stereotypes that held by society that it is not possible to have the spiritual knowledge or skills unless one has lived to a certain age. This belief contradicts the fact that many individuals often discover their gifts and acquire their teachings at a very young age and are fully capable of providing traditional teachings and ceremonies (Waldram, 1997).

The importance of Elders to the *Lodge* is evidenced in their presence in traditional ceremonies such as sweats, cedar tipi, healing ceremonies, talking circles, vision quests, Sun Dances, and so forth.⁴⁷ However, this is also where another difficulty may ensue: gender. Although Elders may be male or female, a problematic arises due to the traditional beliefs that during her “moon time” (menstrual cycle), women are very powerful and they must not handle or be close to sacred objects⁴⁸. Two dimensions exist

⁴⁶ On a few occasions, when working with a First Nations community, I came across situations where an individual would present themselves as an Elder and I would be advised at a later date that the individual was not respected in the community, nor did the community recognize this individual as an Elder.

⁴⁷ The insistence on the use of traditional teachings (and correlating cultural sensitivity) should not mean that every traditional teaching or ceremony must be included. Based on current realities and the loss of many teachings, it is arguably impossible to know exactly what different permutations and alterations have occurred with the teachings and ceremonies. It was found in the final report of the Traditional Dene Justice Project in the Northwest Territories (1993, as cited in Ross, 1996: 262): “Many of the *practices* from the past cannot address current problems. However, if the *values* attached to those practices could be reclaimed, and new practices built on them, then it could work”(original emphasis).

⁴⁸ There have been many instances where I have not been able to participate in cleansing ceremonies, pipe ceremonies or sweats as a result of being on my moon time. Moreover, when speaking to the Program Director at *Okimaw Ohci* about visiting the site and participating in traditional ceremonies, we had to ensure that it would not be on my moon time.

to this problem: first, if only female Elders provide the traditional ceremonies, what is done to ensure that the ceremonies continue if they are menstruating? Second, if male Elders are utilized for traditional ceremonies what happens when the Eskwewuk are experiencing their moon time? Although some may view this as a petty concern, it is a very real issue that can dramatically affect service delivery. As one Elder (male) relates:

It is very difficult in here. I don't bring my pipe in here. There's a visiting room nearby. With all respect to women, there's women walking up there. Women are very powerful. They are alot stronger than us, spiritually and mentally. Physically we are strong, but the strength that they possess, man doesn't possess that. And out of respect, I won't bring my pipe in here. I bring my sweetgrass in here, but not my pipe. I won't (cited in Waldram, 1997: 121).

Consistency is another area affected by the presence or absence of Elders. It is especially important in matters of healing. Should an Eskwewuk develop a relationship with a specific Elder, her progress (as well as programming) could be jeopardised if this Elder's presence was missing. It is noted (CSC, nd.: 5) "[d]ue to the diversity of Nations of residents at the *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge*, we utilize the services of Elders of many tribes. These nations include, Salteaux, Ojibway, Blackfoot, Blood, Cree and Sioux." Moreover, "[a] minimum of one Elder will be available at the Lodge on a full-time basis; however, the position will not always be occupied by the same individual. A rotational position would accommodate the needs of the women" (CSC, nd.: 10). Although the use of a rotational position will accommodate the various cultural groups of the Eskwewuk at the *Lodge*, what it fails to account for is consistency.

Expectations placed on Elders are highlighted by Elders from the Sto:lo Nation whom I interviewed in 1996. This Elder and her husband assisted and provided services

for the federal and provincial institutions in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. She indicated that CSC and the offenders they visited constantly called on them and that they were continually dealing with crisis and calls for assistance with spiritual matters. They both stated that they were beginning to dislike what they were doing and were suffering from 'burn-out' due to the demand for their services.

The reliance of Elders in federal and provincial institutions who do not have a mandate to promote healing or deliver their services in a holistic and culturally relevant manner cannot compare to the requirements of the *Healing Lodge*. The isolated location of the *Lodge* simply adds to the monumental position for the Elders.

Training and Hiring of Staff

The vision of the *Healing Lodge* requires a new approach to the training and hiring of staff. Since the *Lodge* is designed to meet the specific needs of First Nations women, staff at *Okimaw Ohci* are predominately First Nations⁴⁹ and are all female (although there were two men out of thirty seven who completed the first phase of the training when the *Lodge* initially opened).⁵⁰ Because it is a place of healing, the relationship between the staff and the Eskwewuk is also different from that experienced at the former Prison for Women. This cultural difference is evident in the names given to staff members:

⁴⁹ Discussions with administrative staff at the *Healing Lodge* indicated that a minimum of 60% of staff will be First Nations.

⁵⁰ At this time, it is not known if any male staff (excluding Elders) are currently employed at the *Healing Lodge*.

Table 3 **New Staff Titles Used at the *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge***

Correctional Demarcation	Healing Lodge Demarcation
Warden	Kikawinaw ("Our Mother")
Case Managers	Aunts
Primary Workers	Older Sister

Along with this change in semantics, the most relevant difference in staffing at the *Lodge* can be found in the area of training.

When an individual is hired by CSC, they participate in a thirteen week mandatory training program. Although it is helpful to have a basic knowledge of corrections, the Correctional Officer Training Program (COTP) is meant to provide applicants with the information necessary to work in a federal institution without much difficulty. The *Healing Lodge* takes this one step further. Prior to working at the *Healing Lodge*, all staff must participate in personal healing (Lockhart, Personal Communication, 1997). This component to the thirteen week training is approximately one month in length, and has taken place at a variety of First Nations healing centres such as New Dawn Centre, Poundmakers Lodge, Qu'Appelle, the Neechi Institute and Turtle Island Centre for Justice (Myran, 1994: np)

The premise behind this personal healing is the belief that staff must deal with their own problems prior to assisting the Eskwewuk with their healing. *Unhealed people*

cannot hope to heal others-instead their can only be an escalation of illness. This ground-breaking notion for Corrections, however, is plagued by a variety of pragmatic issues.⁵¹ First, it is difficult to conclude that one month is a sufficient length of time to achieve personal healing. Depending on the number of issues, whether or not the individual is ready to deal with or discuss them, whether or not they even recognize that they have a problem and their ability to share these issues with a group of co-workers who are participating in the same process must be considered. Second, as was noted in regards to the Eskwewuk, the approach taken to this personal healing is also affected by the cultural profile of the trainees. The time required to heal may vary based on their being traditional, bi-cultural, or assimilated. It may also be affected by the cultural profile and cultural group of the “healer.” Ross (1996: 155) also notes the following:

. . . it is my sense that [you] cannot create healing teams as if they were instant puddings. So much more needs to be done than simply locating a dozen interested people, adding money and stirring in a few ceremonies.

A third variable to consider is that Corrections is plagued by a high rate of staff turnover. The question of *consistency* thus arises. If a high level of turn-over exists, it will undoubtedly affect the ability of trainees to undergo their own “healing.” If it is necessary to maintain twenty-six staff members, the additional time constraints imposed by this extra month may have adverse results on the ability of the administration to continue with this aspect of training. To compensate for and ensure appropriate staffing levels, this aspect of training may result in its delay or cancellation.

⁵¹ It is necessary to keep in mind that the all staff members at *Okimaw Ohci* do not have to be “completely” healed, especially since healing is a life-long, never-ending journey. It is necessary, however, for the staff members to have identified issues and sufficiently addressed them.

The answers to these questions have yet to be determined. It is paramount to the success of the *Lodge* that they be addressed and considered. Should these issues be left unaddressed, the principles espoused by the *Lodge* will undoubtedly be compromised.

Eskwewuk Selection Criteria

From the moment of its conception, the vision for *Okimaw Ohci* was to meet the specific cultural and healing needs of First Nations female offenders. Following from this, a transition phase was necessary to provide Eskwewuk at the various institutions across Canada with information about *Okimaw Ohci*. Staff from *Okimaw Ohci* visited P4W, Portage Correctional Centre, Lethbridge Correctional Centre and the Regional Psychiatric Centre to provide the women with information about *Okimaw Ohci* and to determine the level of interest for attendance.

It was acknowledged that not all First Nations women would want to be transferred to *Okimaw Ohci*, but due to the limited number of beds available at *Okimaw Ohci*, a methodology was required to enable equitable access for the Eskwewuk. Initially, a “transition team” was established that conducted “personal interviews with all the federally sentenced women who indicate an interest in coming to the Healing Lodge” (Healing Lodge, nd: np). Further, it was determined that a front end assessment would be done on all the women to provide background information, their reasons for wanting to transfer to *Okimaw Ohci*, their commitment, and “relevant information that will enable the team to determine who will benefit the most from coming to the Healing Lodge” (Healing Lodge, nd: np). It is also worthy to note that *Okimaw Ohci* has accommodated

all security levels-minimum, medium and maximum, even though it initially accepted only minimum security women.

This initial method for accepting First Nations women may have been beneficial and the most equitable, but several problematics exist due to its continued use. Although elders and administrators now conduct interviews for those women who wish to serve their sentence at *Okimaw Ochi* (Lockhart, 1997), questions of consistency, equality of access and feasibility must be addressed.

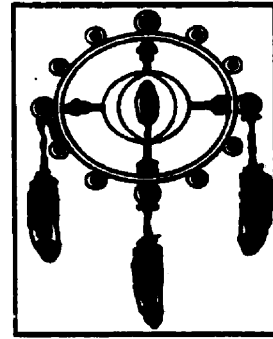
The issue of establishing criteria for acceptance at *Okimaw Ohci* is not unreasonable per se. This practice is currently employed with male offenders with their placement in a remand centre while they undergo a six-week assessment period to determine their security status, and what institution would provide programs to best meet their needs. However, *Okimaw Ohci* has been designated a multi-security institution. In this regard, one is left to base attendance on questions of programming. As was discussed previously, programming at *Okimaw Ohci* is based on First Nations cultures and traditions, with the ultimate goal to heal offenders. It is unclear whether objective criteria can or even should be established.

If objective criteria are not employed to determine who is sent to this institution, an administrative problem will undoubtedly develop. Yet, due to the multi-security status of *Okimaw Ohci*, criteria need to be determined to ensure the safety and well-being of all those who participate. Perhaps the most telling process is the determination of who is not accepted to *Okimaw Ohci*, and what rationale is used to justify turning someone away.

The selection process is further compounded by the apparent failure of *Okimaw Ohci* to account for the different cultural orientations of the Eskwewuk. Comack (1996)

and Waldram (1997) found that some First Nations offenders discover their cultural traditions and teachings for the very first time in prison. If most of the Eskwewuk who initially applied to the *Lodge* identified themselves as “assimilated,” the approach to healing and programming will be dramatically different compared to what would be required if the Eskwewuk identified themselves as “traditional” or “bi-cultural.”

It is clear that there must be criteria established to determine who should serve their sentence at *Okimaw Ohci*. What remains to be seen, however, is whether or not women are selected who would be rehabilitated irregardless of where they completed their sentence, or if women are selected who have more deep-seeded and difficult issues to overcome are selected. In short, will the focus remain on healing or will it instead be on recidivism statistics? The staff at the *Healing Lodge* will need to careful not to set a standard of accepting women who, in their view, are risk-free or pose little to no threat of returning to a life of crime once released. The danger lies in this institution being measured against a system (and other institutions) that does not even exist. In the long run, this may establish a precedent that the *Lodge* will not be able to meet, and that *could* culminate in its abandonment.



THE WEST DOOR

Before the arrival of the white man, conceptions of justice among the First Nations were as varied as the terrain of their homeland, but a number of commonalities could be found (Jefferson, 1980: 6). The inherent differences in values and perceptions lead to a distinct concept of justice. First Nations' peoples view justice as a time for healing, resolution and reconciliation. First Nations' justice is informal, and as a result, involves direct reconciliation between the offender and the victim. On the other hand, for Euro-Western culture, justice is synonymous with concepts such as retribution, deterrence and punishment. Consequently, a legal system must be created in which First Nations peoples can find their values and culture. Only in doing so can the conflict between these two cultures diminish.

First Nations' peoples possess certain inherent values. These values are based upon core vision and respect. Such values include the concept of *sharing* which recognizes the "interdependence and inter-relatedness of all of life" and "to relate to one another with an ethic of sharing, generosity, and collective/communal consciousness and co-operation" (Dumont, 1993, 57). Stemming from the distinctiveness of these values, the First Nations' person in the justice system experiences great difficulty and hardship.

Dumont asserts that "a justice system that is based in Aboriginal culture would presumably speak more appropriately to Aboriginal people and be responsive to culture-based values and behavior" and would "reduce the conflict Aboriginal persons and communities have with the shortcomings and unsuitability of the present justice system in dealing with Aboriginal people" (Dumont, 1993: 69). As such, it would be a justice system which included concepts such as reconciliation, restitution, counsel and compensation rather than the Euro-Western concepts of punishment, confinement and retribution; one which would respect the values that comprise the First Nations spiritual core (Dumont, 1993: 69). Dumont asserts that such a system of justice must not only espouse the "balance and reconciliation of the whole, but does so by honouring and respecting the inherent dignity of the individual" (Dumont, 1993: 69). Dumont (1993: 69) indicates that in such a system there exists a "judgement which is 'gwakik': straight and honest, while at the same time being 'minodjiwin': respectful of the integrity of all persons, both the wronged and the wrong-doer."

Canadian society and its institutions are, for the most part, not conducive to the needs of First Nations peoples. Within Canada, there is an inconsistency between the values of the dominant society and those espoused by First Nations peoples. As a result of the incompatibility between the two cultures, there is a dire need for a specific First Nations legal system in order to meet the specific needs of First Nations peoples- a focus on healing, spirituality, resolution and reconciliation, to name a few. Canadian and First Nations cultures are diametrically opposed with respect to the legal system. This becomes evident with an examination of First Nations and non-First Nations values and

perceptions. The two frameworks of post-colonial theory and women's standpoints theory can assist in explaining those differences.

Post-Colonial Theory⁵²

Before outlining the relevance of post-colonial theory, I feel it is first necessary to provide a general definition of classic colonialism.. For Robert Blauner, this "involved the control and exploitation of the majority of a nation by a minority of outsiders" (Marger, 1994: 138). This contrasts with "internal colonialism," a condition whereby ethnic groups are dominated and oppressed, but where "both the dominant group and the subordinate groups are indigenous . . . the dominant group is a numerical majority" (Marger, 1994: 138).

Blauner (1969: 396, as cited in Marger, 138) maintains that there are four basic components of a "colonization complex": (1) colonization begins with a forced, involuntary entry; (2) the colonizing power alters basically or destroys the indigenous culture; (3) members of the colonized group tend to be governed by representatives of the dominant group; (4) the system of dominant-subordinate relations is buttressed by a racist ideology."

Using this model, we can see that First Nations peoples *are* colonized peoples. In this respect, movements and actions that struggle to alter these four conditions arguably fall under the rubric of post-colonialism. In that post-colonialism and thus post-colonial theory marks the attempts of the oppressed to come out from under the control and oppression of the colonizer, to propose counter-hegemonic voices, views and ideas, one

can conclude that the *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge* concept fits nicely within the framework of post-colonial theory.

According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1989: 2) 'post-colonial' is defined as follows:

We use the term 'post-colonial,' however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression.

It must be stated, however, that immense diversity exists regarding post-colonial theory, and my thesis will, by no means, be able to address all of the issues inherent to all of the viewpoints.

The dismantling of power relations between the oppressor and the oppressed is inherent to post-colonial theory. Mishra and Hodge (1994: 286) note that three principles are fundamental for the post-colonial: racism, a second language, and political struggle. This echoes what Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1989) see as the crucial features of post-colonialism: fracture, polyglossia⁵³, and subversion. The attempt to de-centre the imperial in its relationship with the colonized (First Nations peoples) is also a part of the exercise. Part of this de-centring is the revitalisation of First Nations cultures, traditions, languages and spirituality that Canadians are currently witnessing. It also requires turning the Object of imperial relations into a Subject, worthy in their own right of espousing knowledge, thought and regulation of their own destinies.

⁵² Many scholars and researchers in this area have yet to arrive at any agreement concerning this theory and its implications.

⁵³ Polyglossia is defined as the knowing, using or writing in several languages.

First Nations women fight a double-headed dragon. They are largely colonized and, by virtue of being women, must also fight the forces of patriarchy. Any post-colonial theory must account for this. First Nations women must be permitted to speak for themselves, and not be spoken for; English does not have to be the language of choice.

The silencing of First Nations women's voices can be framed in a colonial context. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, most First Nations were matrilineal in nature (Dumont, Personal Communication, 1992). Clan determination followed the mother's line, women determined who would be leader, women passed the culture and traditions on to their children and so forth. However, when the Europeans arrived, they did not understand or condone this. European culture was patrilineal and it was believed that this was the "right way." This belief in the authority of men, and the subservience of women could not have been made clearer than through the inclusion of section 12 (1)(b) of the *Indian Act*. Although this section was amended, the repercussions of this section continue to exist today. Women in First Nations communities continue to battle against the legacy of patriarchy at all fronts.

Women's Standpoints Theory⁵⁴

I cannot separate my gender from my culture. I am not a woman
sometimes and a Cree at others . . . both are intertwined in the way I
experience and understand the world.

Mary E. Turpel (as cited in Schienbein, 1992: 431)

⁵⁴ Concurring with the critique of the terminology "feminist standpoint" theory by Marlee Kline (1991), entitled, *Women's Oppression and Racism: Critique of the 'Feminist Standpoint'* I have chosen to employ "women's standpoints" as it seems to be more encompassing for my purposes.

It is at this juncture that women's standpoints theory intersects with post-colonial theory. Women's standpoints theory is one of the three streams of feminist epistemologies identified by Sandra Harding (1986, 1991). Women's standpoint theory is one method for understanding the relations that exist between women, nature and culture. According to women's standpoints theory as discussed by Harding (1991: 119), in a society that is stratified across many different lines, no claim to objectivity, impartiality or detachment from the particular, historical and social relations can be made. In short, all knowledge is socially situated.

Women's standpoints theory is imbedded within notions of identity politics that pay a great deal of attention to both *who you are* and *where you speak from*. Dorothy Smith and Patricia Hill Collins provide a good starting place for an examination of women's standpoints theory. Smith examines the development of social consciousness and social relations and explains it as falling within the standpoint of those men who are located in the "relations of ruling" (1987: 3). She contends that the ideology that subsumes these "relations of ruling" support the way individuals think about the world and order their experiences in a way that is consistent with the perspectives and aims of the ruling class.

Patricia Hill Collins, articulating a woman's standpoint distinctive to Black women⁵⁵, includes ethnicity⁵⁶ as a variable in her analysis. Collins contends that a different consciousness exists among African-American women by virtue of their

⁵⁵ This is not to imply, however, that she speaks *for* (all) Black women. This is one of the reasons why it is important to refer to "standpoints" within this particular theory.

⁵⁶ Although the term "race" is often employed when relating to Black, Asian, East Indian (etc.) women, I do not condone the use of this nomenclature. It is my contention that the continued use of the word "race" perpetuates colonialist attitudes. It therefore has no place in discourse that attempts to address issues of oppression, unless its use is in the form "racism." All peoples of the world are member of the *same* race--

distinctive sets of experiences. The standpoints of Black women thus stem from their own particular experiences of ethnic and gender oppression. Collins makes an important declaration that the standpoint obtained by being both black and female cannot be obtained from the simplistic combination of Afro-centric and feminist values. Instead, she argues it is necessary for Black women to occupy an “outsider within” status. Thus, one is not forced to prioritise one form of oppression over the other.

The need to recognize culture and ethnicity as a basis of “otherness” for First Nations women and the way in which this affects the criminal justice experience is expressed by Winona Stevenson, a Cree woman:

I do not call myself a feminist. . . . I believe that while feminists and Indigenous women have a lot in common, they are in separate movements. Feminism defines sexual oppression as the Big Ugly. The Indigenous Women’s movement sees colonization and racial oppression as the Big Uglies. Issues of sexual oppression are seldom articulated separately because they are a part of the Bigger Uglies. Sexual oppression was, and is, one part of the colonization of Indigenous peoples (cited in Monture-OKanee, 1992b: 117).

Despite the vast literature available regarding First Nations *men* and their encounters with all aspects of the criminal justice system, a notable gap exists that uncovers the experiences of Eskwewuk. As it is acknowledged that, generally, the voices of women as a group, have been silenced, it is fair to say that the voices of First Nations women have been doubly silenced. Through *Creating Choices*, the voices of First

the human race. Any distinction based on culture, skin colour and the like are members of different *ethnic and/or cultural groups*.

Nations women were heard. And it is through the construction of the *Healing Lodge* that they will continue to be heard.⁵⁷

Women's standpoints theory, in that it situates and uses women's experiences as a starting point, allows us to understand how the past abuses suffered by the Eskwewuk at the hands of their partners, families and society brought them into conflict with the legal system. Using women's standpoints as a starting place allows for the recognition that, although the Eskwewuk committed acts that are against the law, the women must also be seen as "victims." Although this is not to abdicate any responsibility for the criminal acts committed by the Eskwewuk, women's standpoints permits an examination of the events that lead up to the offending behaviour and requires that all of these experiences are accounted for to contextualize social and cultural behaviours that have been labelled criminal. It is through this context of experience that is made meaningful the application of the two theoretical frameworks chosen and which in turn allows us to begin to envision how that meaning can lead to the development of theories of healing for the Eskwewuk.

Cultural Orientation: Does it Really Matter?

I think of it all in a circle: If you're going to commit yourself to healing, if you're going to commit yourself to a better way of life, there are a number of paths you can take to get in. *You may decide that your priorities are to understand who you are as an Aboriginal woman . . .* (emphasis added)

Trish Monture (as cited in Palumbo and Palumbo, 1992: 21)

Before embarking on a "model of healing," it is crucial to address the issue of cultural orientation or cultural profile.⁵⁸ Available literature discussing the situation of

⁵⁷ Once again, the account of Yvonne Johnson's life in the autobiography *Stolen Life: The Journey of a*

First Nations offenders in prison have suffered in two ways. First, the discussions occur in a manner that groups First Nations offenders as a homogenous group; second, there is a failure to account for cultural variability that exists. In this respect then, the cultural orientation of each Eskwewuk admitted to *Okimaw Ohci* could have dramatic effects on the overall operation of the programs, Elders required, level of healing obtained during their stay and post-release needs.

From a cultural standpoint, Waldram (1997: 28) notes First Nations offenders are a “microcosm of the natural society. Therefore we find many Aboriginal inmates with little or no knowledge of the Aboriginal culture or languages.” As mentioned previously, for Eskwewuk, this is the culmination of the residential school system, the effects of section 12(1)(b) of the *Indian Act* and the transition from a maternalistic to paternalistic way of life. However, if the Eskwewuk spent most of her life in an isolated community with little direct experience with urban life, she may only know the traditional ways. Further, there may be some women who spent their lives moving back and forth from the urban and reserve communities and are therefore familiar with both lifestyles.

The Task Force on Aboriginal Peoples in Federal Corrections (1988: 39) recognized that there four distinct categories of First Nations offenders. Although they were referring to male offenders, women could arguably be divided in a similar manner:

1. Traditional persons
2. Persons-in-Transition-These are persons “whose culture is Aboriginal who are moving towards non-Aboriginal culture but as yet have limited functional experience with non-Aboriginal society.”

Cree Woman, exemplifies the power and need for women’s standpoints.

⁹⁸ Although the information regarding cultural orientation was derived through interviews with First Nations male offenders, it does not follow that women should not be affected by this issue. The degree that women are affected, is however, an area that requires future research to make any conclusive statements.

3. "Bicultural" persons-These are persons "who are experienced in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal societies."
4. "Assimilated" persons-Those persons who function more easily in non-Aboriginal environments.

The traditionally orientated First Nations person is normally characterized by their complete enculturation into a First Nations community. This entails the speaking of a First Nations language, and is often the only language they are able to speak. Some may be able to converse in English, but their mastery of this language is minimal.

Traditionally orientated individuals have had very little exposure to non-First Nations cultures and have lived a majority of their lives in rural or remote areas. Knowledge of spiritual practices and cultural history is greatest with this group.

Additionally, individuals who are considered "traditional" do not experience identity crises. They are comfortable being of First Nations ancestry and do not express any shame or embarrassment with this (Waldram, 1997).

Bicultural individuals, Waldram (1997: 31) notes, are "the most difficult to define." Those who consider themselves to be bicultural are representative of those who have been exposed to First Nations culture and Euro-Canadian culture and are able to operate, to a certain extent, in both with some level of ease. These individuals are normally bilingual, but prefer using the English language. These individuals may also express some level of embarrassment at their First Nations identity and are not as well versed on their cultural traditions or history (Waldram, 1997).

Individuals who are considered 'assimilated' have spent most of their life in Euro-Canadian culture and are considerably lacking in exposure to First Nations culture. As a result, most of these individuals are not able to speak a First Nations language. They are more likely to deny their First Nations heritage, and are usually embarrassed or ashamed

of their First Nations identity. They also suffer from a poor understanding and knowledge of their cultural traditions and history (Waldram, 1997).

Notwithstanding that both the Task Force (1998) and Waldram's (1997) research employed male First Nations offenders to arrive at the definitions for these cultural orientations, it can be argued that female First Nations offenders fall into the same categories, based on their lived experiences. Following from this, depending on where the Eskwewuk places herself on this continuum, it will affect her attitudes and affinity for the traditional teachings, healing practices, and culturally orientated programs available at *Okimaw Ohci*. Reflecting on this, and recognizing the colonial experiences of many First Nations women, many Eskwewuk experience a certain degree of identity crisis (see Comack, 1996 and Wiebe & Johnson). Waldram (1997: 67) notes that this crisis can result in a total rejection of anything that relates to their First Nations heritage to others who are " . . . passively interested in exploring their Aboriginal roots." In this way, identity issues are central to the healing process of the Eskwewuk. It could be argued then, that prior to commencing any healing work, Elders at *Okimaw Ohci* should focus on determining and resolving any identity conflict. A failure to properly address the cultural orientation of the Eskwewuk could result in her feeling forced to identify with traditions, ceremonies and practices before she is ready: the effects of this could be counter-productive to her overall healing and rehabilitation and aggravate her identity conflict.

A Model of Healing

Prisons ought to 'help [prisoners] learn what it means to have good relationships with other people. . . In effect, we are trying to teach people how to live.

John Edwards (as cited in Cayley, 1998: 97).

People heal best when they heal *with* each other.

Ojibwae woman (as cited in Ross, 1996: 65).

Mathiesen (as cited in Cayley, 1998: 98) states that the concept of rehabilitation, implies that there is the ability to return to a previous competence or state. However, many First Nations female offenders have never known such a condition. Their lives have been filled with violence, turmoil and trauma. Acknowledging that it can be very difficult to change directions, change what feels comfortable, and address the abuses that have occurred in one's past, Csordas (1983, as cited in Waldram, 1997: 72) notes that the individual first has to believe that healing is possible. He continues that, ". . . individuals do not primarily become involved . . .to seek healing; rather healing often follows a period of involvement. The implication is that some form of education, an introduction to the basic elements, principles, symbols and rhetoric, is required first" (as cited in Waldram, 1997: 73).

Acknowledging that the Eskwewuk must first resolve any identity conflicts before they can truly "buy-in" to and accept the traditions and customs offered at *Okimaw Ohci*, the Elders and program staff must also account for the different meanings and importance assigned by each Eskwewuk to the healing practices that are provided. As indicated by John McCreery (1979: 53, as cited in Waldram, 1997: 76), "[t]ypically, rituals . . . mean

different things to different people. A ritual which is deeply moving to one individual may have only a superficial impact on another, while to still another it may be nonsensical or a mask for deceit.” If the Elders and Eskwewuk are not able to arrive at a common cultural framework and understanding of traditional healing practices, or if they are not able to adapt to the various cultural orientations, healing will be made more difficult. Waldram (1997:80-81) concurs:

The symbols utilized in this process are not just cultural but are highly particularized to specific communities and adherents. Aboriginal spirituality is very individualistic, and Elders from the same culture and even the same community will likely have a somewhat different approach to various ceremonies or to explaining the nature of symbols.

Furthermore, Waldram (1997: 129) states, “some Aboriginal offenders come from communities where practices such as the use of sweetgrass and sweatlodges have long been absent, or from communities where such practices were foreign to their traditional cultures.” If *Okimaw Ohci* focuses primarily on these traditions, it will simply be perpetuating the experiences at P4W.

Recognising the aforementioned issues, the development of a “model of healing” becomes a difficult one. Robert Fulghum (1988: 40-41) clearly summarises what must be recognized in establishing a model of healing:

We are as different from one another on the inside of our heads as we appear to be different from one another on the outside of our heads. Look around and see the infinite variety of human heads--skin, hair, age, ethnic characteristics, size, colour, shape. And know that on the inside, such differences are even greater--what we know, how we learn, how we process information, what we remember and forget, our strategies for functioning and coping. Add to that the

understanding that the “world” out “there” is as much a projection from inside our heads as it is a perception

It is compounded by the correctional perspectives that the criminality of offenders can be understood in terms of criminogenic factors. However, for the Eskwewuk, although criminogenic factors have a role in their criminal behaviours, it is necessary to look beyond these factors and reflect upon the history of colonization, residential schools, assimilation policies and histories of personal abuse.⁵⁹ Combined with the previous discussion on the crisis in identity that is frequently evident, healing entails both cultural and spiritual education as well as a rebuilding of self-esteem. Hazelhurst (1994: 129), contends that:

There is nothing more limiting to our ability to enjoy personal growth than a harsh, internalised attitude of self loathing. The first step in healing is learning to appreciate and love ourselves. Without this, we cannot appreciate or love others. Nor can we deal honestly with those behaviours which are self-abusive, or abusive of our families or our wider community.

In this respect, it is recognised that an important aspect of the healing process for the Eskwewuk, will be learning to see themselves as worthy individuals who are capable of giving and receiving to themselves and society. To accomplish this, the healing paradigm at *Okimaw Ohci* will need to assist the Eskwewuk in changing the self-defeating perceptions they hold of themselves. An old Chinese proverb (cited in

⁵⁹ Leroy Littlebear (1994: 73) refers to these parts of an offender’s story as the-“but” factor. This factor is the part of the offender’s story that makes up the contextual setting for the events that occurred. For example, ‘Yes, I did kill my husband, but it is because he had just beaten me and my kids up in a drunken rage and was holding a gun to my head telling me that if I tried to leave he would kill me, my kids and my entire family.’ It is important to state, however, that the ‘but’ factor is not meant to excuse or justify criminal behaviour. This factor is nicely encapsulated in women’s standpoints theory.

Hazelhurst, 1994: 147) captures the essence of what is required: “Before a thing of beauty can be made in the material world, first it must be conceived in the heart and mind.”⁶⁰

To enable healing to occur at *Okimaw Ohci*, there needs to be a move away from “problem-specific” programs and methodologies, such as Anger Management, Narcotics Anonymous, Cognitive Skills and so forth. Focusing on these moves away from the holistic orientation that traditional healing reflects. The specific problems that are addressed through programs such as Narcotics Anonymous and Anger Management can be handled on a more general level if it is recognized that these issues are symptoms of larger issues, that being the effects of colonialism, cultural oppression and a loss of identity. This holistic view to healing brings us back to the circular vision and approach to life witnessed by the Medicine Wheel. This “healing circle” approach also necessitates that the Eskwewuk have a direct and decisive role in the determination of what the necessary components to their healing are as well as being the administrators of their healing when this is possible. In other words:

The healing circle approach means owning our own healing. We need to link all the issues together - alcoholism, family violence, child abuse, rape, incest, unemployment and health. Healing programs are effective because they take a holistic approach. They treat not only victims, they also treat the perpetrators (Hazelhurst, 1994: 134) (original emphasis).

⁶⁰ However, it must be recognized that healing may not work for everyone.

The overall atmosphere at the *Healing Lodge*, in which the Eskwewuk will be able to change their unconscious beliefs is also a requirement. Although there is no singular technique to obtaining a positive atmosphere, the necessary support is partially achieved at *Okimaw Ohci* by the different demarcations for staff members, as was mentioned earlier. The seemingly inconsequential change in terms from 'Warden' to 'Mother' or 'Case Manager' to 'Aunt' can provide a substantial shift in attitude, belief and environment. Hazelhurst (1994: 130), notes that, "[w]ithin a positive, supportive and loving environment people can be aided to change their image of themselves, and the potential of those around them."

The development of a healing paradigm at *Okimaw Ohci* must also account for the importance of 'community' in the lives of the Eskwewuk. Family, friends, other community members, and the Eskwewuk's victims (if they are not deceased as a result of her offence) must be considered and integrated in each woman's healing. Although a course of action must be established that rebuilds the esteem, addresses the identity conflicts, assists with the issues of abuse and so forth, of each Eskwewuk, reciprocal attention and inclusion of the aforementioned individuals in the healing process needs to occur. The exclusion of any party would be a move away from the belief in the connectedness and inter-relatedness that exists between the Eskwewuk and other individuals.⁶¹ Rupert Ross, (as cited in Cayley, 1998: 211) concurs with the view:

I can only mention some of the things that I would look for in order to evaluate whether something is sincerely and fully within the healing paradigm.

⁶¹ Also see Murray Sinclair (1994), "Aboriginal Peoples, Justice and the Law," in *Continuing Poundmaker and Riel's Quest: Presentations Made at a Conference on Aboriginal Peoples and Justice*.

I would look, for instance at any program that only dealt with the offender as one that was not responding to this other way of looking at things. [A program that fits the paradigm is one] that considers all the people in a relationship with the offender, and spends at least the same amount of time . . . if I did not see that breadth . . . I would be suspicious.

Furthermore, Ross (1996: 15) states:

. . . the best way to respond to the inevitable ups and downs of life, whether defined as a "criminal" or not , is not by punishing solitary offenders. The focus must be shifted instead towards the teaching and healing of all the parties involved, with an eye on the past to understand how things have come to be, and an eye on the future to design measures that show the greatest promise of making it healthier for all concerned.

The variance in size of each Eskwewuk's 'community' will require that a program of healing be established that reflects her unique needs.⁶² The progress and nature of healing will be much like removing the layers of an onion. To reach the core of each problem the Eskwewuk is facing, many layers will have to be removed; many individuals will need to be included. It will also be harmful to establish specific timeframes for the issues to be addressed. Moreover, the course of healing cannot be viewed as a straight path; setbacks will occur, stumbling blocks will arise and the Eskwewuk may decide to abandon her healing for any number of reasons. Healing requires the understanding that numerous demons must simultaneously be fought, that temptations to slide back to old habits and ways will be strong and that to begin the process of weaving and wearing an entirely new awareness is long and arduous. And all of this requires the awareness that it

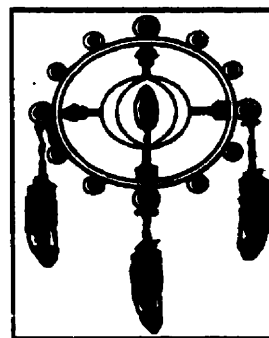
⁶² Hazelhurst (1994: 154), notes that, "[t]he healing of an individual will begin the healing of the *whole community*."

depends on each Eskwewuk to decide for themselves that this is the path desired and it cannot be forced upon them.

The way in which healing will need to transpire at *Okimaw Ohci* will not be homogenous or common place. The success of each Eskwewuk will be dependent on the capacity for staff and Elders at the *Lodge* to establish and determine a unique path based on the cultural orientation, problematics, community and level of identity conflict. It may require the development of programs that are currently not in place at *Okimaw Ohci*. It may also require a considerable amount of time be spent with each Eskwewuk after she has been released from *Okimaw Ohci*, and returned to her community. Hazelhurst (1994: 157) contends that:

. . . the history and evolution of the problems of disempowerment, addiction, ill-health, violence and imprisonment have produced a complex and inter-related cycle which impacts upon the individual and upon the generations. . . . the only effective *treatment of multifaceted problems is multifaceted solutions*. As the nature of any cycle is circular, there is no single point of entry. Intervention should occur at as *many different points* as possible (original emphasis).

In light of all that is required to encourage, facilitate and promote holistic healing of the Eskwewuk at *Okimaw Ohci*, it is difficult to determine, at this point in time, whether the practice of healing the *Lodge* hopes to achieve can transpire within the current operational framework and CSC policies that it is obligated to follow.



THE NORTH DOOR

It has been stated that the fundamental desire for women serving their time at the *Healing Lodge* is to be released to their communities. However, I contend a speedy and immediate return to "community" is not always the primary target solution. Mechanisms must be in place to accept these women and to accommodate any feelings of loss, alienation, confusion and fear that will arise with the release from *Okimaw Ohci*. Cayley (1998: 99) captures this difficulty quite eloquently:

... the institution abandons the offender to a dog-eat-dog world in which he is apt to form new criminal associations, become further habituated to violence, increase his dependency on external controls, and therefore become even less fit to live in society than he was before.

Once released from *Okimaw Ohci*, the path to habilitation and community (re)-integration acquires a different dimension for the Eskwewuk. Appropriate community infrastructures that complement and expand upon the healing work done by the Eskwewuk at the *Healing Lodge* must be available. Healing must be *holistic* at both the

individual and collective level.⁶³ In this sense, infrastructures must exist within First Nations communities that not only assist the Eskwewuk in her journey to wholeness, but that “could contribute to a healing relationship between a federally sentenced woman and the community” (Church Council on Justice and Corrections, 1995; 2). Furthermore,

When people cause problems, . . . th[e] law of interconnectedness requires that a justice system investigate all the factors that might have contributed to the misbehaviour. . . . Further, any plan of action must involve not only the individual doing what he or she can with *his* or *her* problem, but the whole, larger group doing what they can about *their* problem. Disharmony within one individual is seen as everyone’s disharmony, for it “infects” all relationships which involve that person. Anything short of that is seen as a naïve response destined to ultimate failure (Ross, 1996: 64)(original emphasis).

Once released to the community, the process of healing must be conducted at the woman’s own pace to permit her gradual improvement. It should not be based on the

⁶³ The *Teaching of the Five Waves*, given to Rupert Ross (1996: 73-74) by an Inuit woman living in Yellowknife (told to her by her father when she was a child and went down to the shores of the Hudson Bay) clearly shows how everything in life is interconnected:

The first waves were those of the winds that were building but not fully arrived, the waves would grow strong as a new weather system came in. The second waves were the ones left over from the weather system that was now fading, for they would continue to affect the water even after the winds had gone. The third were the waves caused by all the ocean currents that came winding around the points and over the shoals for they would present their own forces against the waves from the winds. Fourth were the waves caused by what Westerners call the Gulf Stream, and fifth were the waves caused by the rotation of the earth. Until you looked out and saw how all those forces were coming together, then developed some idea of how they would interact as the day progressed, it was not safe to go out and mingle with them.

Relating this to the idea that the past experiences of the Eskwewuk *must* be considered when developing and determining the course of her healing, Ross (1996: 126) notes that “each wave that comes at you—that will determine your future—comes at you from behind. In that sense, the limits of your future, of where you might come to travel over the course of the day, have been building out of your vision in the wide ocean *behind you*, and way back in time” (original emphasis).

absolute adherence to the conditions outlined in the *CCRA* as this could create unnecessary hardship and avoidable stumbling blocks.

Although initially the entire array of networks and resources that are required for the released woman to succeed may not be available within her community, this does not imply that healing between the community and the Eskwewuk cannot occur. The implementation of a “healing circle,” consisting of the offender(s), community members, family members of the victims and offender(s), and victims can act as the starting point for a new relationship between the Eskwewuk and the community.

The Role of Elders and the Community in the Healing Process

Within First Nations communities, the role of the Elders (women and men) traditionally assumed great importance, and it is to here that First Nations communities must return. First Nations communities as well as Canadian society must afford Elders the stature and recognition congruent with positions of power and experience. Elders need to be perceived as one of the positively valued groups within both First Nations and non-First Nations societies, thus bestowing a certain level of advantage over others, and permitting them to request and make claims against general society (Pal, 1989: 213). This is not to mean that we should bestow more than what others would be entitled. Pal (1989: 213) argues that the valued groups have the benefit of a broad public sympathy and respect.

The traditional role bestowed upon Elders as the teachers of the traditions, the respect they held in the eyes of the community and their role as mediator could be used to establish and develop pre and post-release policies and programs for the *Healing Lodge* is

of extreme importance. They have been integral in the overall development of an undistorted focus on healing within the *Lodge* and in community program development. However, the informal power they presently possess requires greater recognition. This is not to say that it should assume 'formal' status,' in the sense of Western understanding, for this could result in the transformation of this nutrient power into the manipulative and conditional power currently demonstrated by the Solicitor General and Commissioner of Corrections.

The perceptions of non-First Nations peoples in reference to Elders as a group and as a concept may, however, hinder the entire process. A 'mystification' and 'deification' of First Nations Elders by non-First Nations peoples exists, and is reflected in the perception that they are 'existing on a different plane;' as almost supernatural, all- seeing, all-knowing individuals. In this regard, transferring control of the *Healing Lodge* to Elders may receive the full-fledged support of societal members. However, dangers exist in this as well. Elders fall prey to categorisation as a homogeneous group of people, sharing the same ideas, thoughts, values and so forth. This is a dangerous misconception and must be countered by the understanding that Elders are a heterogeneous group of people. In this way, caution must be taken when soliciting Elders to replace the Solicitor General, Commission of Corrections and Parole Board. Co-optation is an element that must be carefully guarded against. As Ross (1996: 15) concludes, "I don't mean to suggest that all Aboriginal leaders who now speak the language of healing are doing so out of an honest commitment to the betterment of their communities." Similarly, Waldram (1997: 126) clarifies and expands on the dangers of this when he states, "Aboriginal spirituality is becoming not just institutionalized, but corporatized. The

correctional system wants Elders who work and behave, not like Aboriginal spiritual people, but like other Euro-Canadian staff.” It will be extremely important that if the Elders assume responsibility for the *Healing Lodge*, that they do not fall prey to this situation. Autonomy from the corporate nature of corrections will be necessary to maintain the spirit and integrity of *Okimaw Ohci*.

Organizing and Facilitating the Process of Change

Before determining the release plans for the women, intensive consultation and communication will have to be conducted with the Eskwewuk⁶⁴, the communities, and Elders who have assisted her healing. In addition, the family of the woman must have been a part of the process, for the outcome could also affect their lives. It is, by necessity, a collaborative process.

A definition of collaboration provided by Ristock and Grieger (1996: 41), in the context of violence is: “collaboration means working together in ways that reflect our understandings that violence is too dangerous and complex a social phenomenon for us to undertake working in isolation.” Collaboration is the coming together of individuals and groups on issues of similar concern that cannot, and perhaps must not, be done without input from all the individuals affected by the issue. Gray (1989 as cited in Jamal and Getz, 1995; 187) provides a similar definition of collaboration as a process of joint decision-making among the key stakeholders of a problem domain about the future of

⁶⁴ Self-determination, empowerment, self-sufficiency and individual differences in the way they work and the pace they wish to take are essential for this to be a successful endeavour.

that domain.⁶⁵ This encapsulates what needs to be done between First Nations communities and CSC. Fawcett (1991: 624), eloquently synthesizes what is meant by collaboration:

The idea of collaboration calls for researchers to involve clients as partners in the process of research and action. . . . A collaborative relationship puts the researcher in the place of learner, recognizing the importance of the knowledge and experience of participants.

Collaboration between the Commissioner of Corrections, Solicitor General, *Healing Lodge*, Elders and First Nations communities must be attempted for any hope of healing to continue when the women leave the facility. Attempts at collaboration, however, are hindered by two facts that need to be addressed: first, collaboration between different ethnic groups produces problems that are only compounded by the added dimension of power relations. Second, previous negative experiences with a collaborative venture can inhibit and restrict attempts to collaborate. This is especially the case if the partner in the collaborative effort is “perceived as an outsider” (Pentz, 1995: 205). In the case of First Nations communities and Canadian society, these problematics can be described as the assumptions, counter-hegemonic world-views, different histories of marginalization and so forth held by the two collaborating parties. In such a situation, Corrections Canada (and more specifically the Solicitor General and Commissioner of Corrections) should gain the support of First Nations communities, as well as those who work and are incarcerated at the *Healing Lodge*. Turpel, (1994: 208-209) reflects on this:

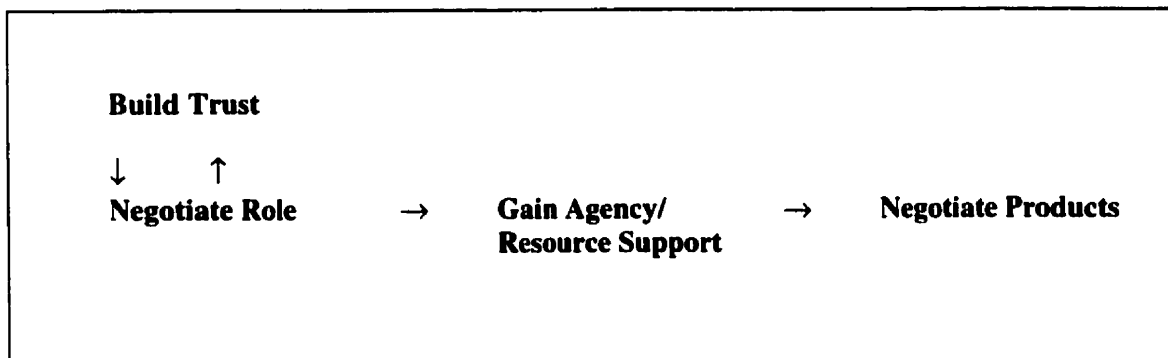
⁶⁵ The notion of collaboration also dictates that the hierarchical or top-down approach used be disbanded. In other words, “the challenge does not involve creating checks and balances *within* those hierarchies, but

Understanding how to work with the other side requires some critical reflection, dialogue and creativity. Once cannot erase the history of colonialism, but we must, as an imperative, undo it in a contemporary context. We are aware that it is part of what we say and do, and that we are attempting to resist and dismantle it. Perhaps this explains why some proposals for an Aboriginal justice system are simply the Canadian justice system with Indians instead of non-Indians in all the conventional roles

The following model by Pentz (1995: 206) is one way to accomplish this.

Figure 2

A Model for Gaining Support and Collaboration



This schema provides a guide for the initial collaboration that must occur between First Nations Elders, Eskwewuk, community members and the Commissioner of Corrections and the Solicitor General. During the process of role negotiation, Elders and community members will have to arbitrate with the Commissioner and Solicitor General exactly what is needed (the transfer of responsibility and accountability). Those who

recognizing that they are problems in and of themselves, then getting rid of them altogether" (Ross, 1996: 56)(original emphasis).

come to the table must focus on maintaining respect and not permitting assumptions or egos to hinder the process. Both sides must feel comfortable voicing opinions and ideas, without fear of ostracization by other members. Disagreements will occur, and these can be negotiated further. As negotiations occur, support for action will be obtained, and this will allow for a continuation of negotiations and discussion. The eventual product of these negotiations will be the development of guidelines and a time-line outlining the transfer of power and responsibility for the *Healing Lodge*. Should trust or mutual respect break down at any stage in the process, the entire procedure could be jeopardised.

To facilitate the successful transfer of power, a mentorship program (Ekstedt, Personal Communication, 1996) could be established with key stakeholders, meeting on a “needs basis” as issues relating to the *Healing Lodge* arise. For example, several months before the release of a woman from *Okimaw Ohci*, meetings could occur with an Elder and the parole board. The Elder could provide guidance on the decisions to grant full or conditional release, the conditions of parole and so forth. The Elder could then also be present at the actual hearing to provide some degree of consistency for the woman and the parole board. It is however, important to keep in mind that this “joining of forces” would be implemented until complete transfer of responsibility occurred. In short, to facilitate and ease the transition of power from the Solicitor General and other agencies to an Elders Committee. The importance, and necessity of this transfer is discussed by Nils Christie in a paper published in 1977, entitled “Conflicts as Property” (Cayley, 1998: 168). In this article, he stated:

Community is made from conflict as much as from cooperation; the capacity to resolve conflict is what gives social relations their sinew. Professionalizing justice

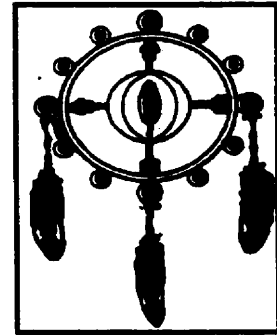
'steals the conflicts,' robbing the community of its ability to face trouble and restore peace. Communities lose their confidence, their capacity, and finally their inclination to preserve their own order.

This statement describes the essence of what has occurred in First Nations communities as a result of their losing control over the course and methods for dispensing justice.

Transferring control of *Okimaw Ohci* to the First Nations community may not only address the long-standing issue of forcing a peoples to accept a justice system that is contradictory to their values and ways of viewing criminal behaviours, but it may also assist in re-establishing a sense of community empowerment, confidence, pride. In other words,

We spent several years in a distracting debate over whether justice reform involves separate justice systems or reforming the mainstream justice system. This is a false dichotomy and a fruitless distinction because it is not an either/or choice. The impetus for change can better be described as getting away from the colonialism and domination of the Canadian criminal justice system. Resisting colonialism means a reclaiming by Aboriginal Peoples of control of the resolution of disputes. . . . Moving in this direction will involve many linkages with the existing criminal justice system and perhaps phased assumption of jurisdiction (Turpel, 1992).

Should control continue to exist with CSC, the *Healing Lodge* will be an indigenised facility that continues to perpetuate the injustices it has aspired to resolve.



(A RETURN TO) THE EAST DOOR

The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie (Marx and Engels, as cited in Pal, 1989: 218)

The evolution and exercise of power relations that resulted from colonization in 1492 with the 'discovery' of America was such that First Nations peoples became an underclass in Canadian society. According to Verdun-Jones and Muirhead (as cited in LaPrairie, 1984b: 25), "the criminal justice system and its components of social control help to maintain the powerlessness of certain groups in society." This distribution of power is reflected within Corrections Canada and continues to guide the everyday operation of the *Healing Lodge*.

Adams (1979: 69) succinctly encapsulates this idea. There are two distinct levels of operation in a colonial society: one is the level of rhetoric, ideals and promises; the second is the level of the actual operation of the system, the daily struggle for existence. He continues:

It is common for government officials to hold elaborate conferences . . . and discuss 'Indian problems' with the native elite. At such conferences, great promises are made

to improve the conditions of the native people. Noble resolutions are passed for important changes and for social action that will result in considerable benefit for the rank-and-file natives. This is the level of promises and rhetoric.

It must therefore be questioned how serious the intent is of Corrections to alter and promote the betterment of First Nations' women in prison.

An added dimension was the readiness of Corrections to build a facility to house First Nations women and to ensure a focus on spirituality while in the institution, while failing to provide external solutions. Adams (1979: 196) defines this emphasis on spirituality in terms of cultural imperialism and is quite cynical in his opinion of the emphasis on this aspect of First Nations in general. Yet it would seem as though his analysis rings true of the situation today:

Cultural nationalism is a reactionary nationalism that forms part of the ideology of imperialism. It is adopted by or imposed on Third World people in their colonized state and it involves the revival of indigenous native traditions and tribalism. Today, in our awakening, many Indians of Canada are returning to native religion and tribal rituals. The danger in this is that it might begin to sever any links with a progressive liberation ideology. The idea that a return to traditional Indian customs and worship will free us from the shackles of colonial domination is deceptive—a return to this kind of traditional worship is a reactionary move and *leads to greater oppression, rather than to liberation*. Cultural nationalism is more than behaving and believing as traditional Indians; it is a return to extreme separatism in the hope that colonial oppression will automatically go away. The emphasis is upon worship and the performance of ritual behaviour, not upon politics and liberation (Adams, 1979: 196) (emphasis added).

The *Healing Lodge* was a large concession by the federal government to provide such a facility and as such corrections can withhold monies, alter or eliminate programs, and suspend its functioning. Due to the enduring colonial attitudes held by government

officials, and reflected in correctional policies that are incongruent with the *Lodge's* vision, full emancipation from this contingency needs to be removed.

The manipulative power of Corrections Canada is evidenced in that they have defined and categorised the *Healing Lodge itself* as a *correctional program* -- a program by type. Validation of this argument comes from section 76 of the *CCRA*, alluded to previously, stipulating that a range of programs are to be provided to address the needs of offenders and contribute to their successful reintegration into the community. The danger of the *Healing Lodge* being conceptualised in such a manner is realised with the possibility of the Minister and Commissioner employing a section of the *Correctional Strategy* (nd: 2) that declares:

The Service must, as any other organisation, set priorities with efficiency in mind. All functions should be reviewed in light of the correctional strategy to determine what resources should be reallocated.

The principles advanced by the Service, adopted to adhere to three fundamental issues could be disastrous for First Nations women:

- guide the establishment of program priorities
- identify programs that should be either altered or eliminated; and
- identify where resource reallocations are possible, and to what programs the resources should be reallocated (Correctional Service Canada, nd: 2).

Although CSC claims that offender **needs** should drive programs and service delivery in CSC (Correctional Service Canada, nd: 2) (original emphasis), the paradigm employed and the perceived stakeholders in the matter of exactly who and what determines the needs of an offender has to be examined. Given the history of Corrections with First Nations women, it would appear that they may *not* be the parties who should be assigned

or trusted with such an obligation. This still holds true even though the *Healing Lodge* employs First Nations peoples themselves. The ability of the Solicitor General and/or Commissioner of Corrections to manipulate the system as they see fit or provide concessions based on conditional circumstances should not be taken for granted. The appropriateness of the Correctional Service, whose primary mandate is to *punish* is questioned when the primary mandate of *Okimaw Ohci* is to heal offenders in a manner that truly reflects First Nations culture and spirituality. A First Nations man, who has spent more than ten years working in the criminal justice system in various capacities expresses his concern:

I am afraid of what will be thought about our culture - if someone doesn't point out - with respect to recent developments where our people are involved, regarding the construction of new prisons that they must not be called "Healing Lodges" or in any way linked to our culture or spirituality (cited in Monture-OKanee, 1992c: 58)(original emphasis).

Currently, the *Healing Lodge* represents only one options available to First Nations peoples for social reform within the correctional enterprise: the interactive approach. However, as time progresses, First Nations communities may decide that the resistance approach or a parallel approach to the current system is more beneficial. Attempts to make generalised statements about which approach would best suit all communities, in a "one size fits all" manner is not what is sought. The limitations and benefits of each direction would need to be determined by the community itself at a grassroots level, taking into account the social and economic feasibility of such a venture.

Corrections must also consider the prospect that the *Healing Lodge* represents a model of corrections that should be considered for all other federal and provincial prisons. As the question about penal abolition continues to be called for by a number of people (see for example Culhane, 1991; Morris, 1995) society must look to something different to assist offenders in their reintegration to society. Ross (1996: 13), during his work with First Nations communities across Canada, found they reacted in a similar manner when speaking to 'punishment-as-justice': they "all look[ed] dumbfounded (or outraged) at my suggestion that punishment might be used to make things better." In fact,

People who offend against another . . . are to be viewed and related to as people who are out of balance-with themselves, their family, their community and their Creator. A return to balance can best be accomplished through a process of accountability that includes support . . . through teaching and healing. The use of judgement and punishment works against the healing process. *An already unbalanced person is moved further out of balance* (Ross, 1996: 171)(original emphasis).

We must avoid designating *Okimaw Ohci* as the best solution for federally incarcerated Eskwewuk. It is true that it represents an extreme shift in correctional policy paradigm dealing with First Nations peoples (Giokas, 1993, 191). As Sally Weaver indicates (Giokas, 1993, 191), a shift where "we move from a paradigm or perspective that focuses on legal formalism and state control to one that focuses on justice more broadly defined and emphasizes mutual adaptation and ongoing inter-cultural relations." Moreover, with the current trend in employing restorative justice (transformative justice) programs and the revisions to the *Criminal Code of Canada* as evidenced through section

718.2 (e), the *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge* is only one of the options available to Eskwewuk of an ever-expanding continuum of options in the arena of First Nations justice. And unless systematic attention is given to the underlying social problems experienced by First Nations peoples, it can only be a cosmetic solution to an overwhelming problem.

EPILOGUE

Policy Implications

Several policy implications arise based on the review of current correctional practices/policies and the information obtained relating to *Okimaw Ohci*. They include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Expand the cultural traditions used**

Recognizing that healing is an individual experience, it is important that First Nations women incarcerated at *Okimaw Ohci*, have access and opportunity to participate in healing ceremonies and practices that are specific to her cultural background if she chooses. Forcing Anishnawbe (Oji-Cree) traditions on an Inuit woman does not respect her inherent right to practice and benefit from her own cultural traditions and may indeed be regarded as “assimilationist.”

- **Recognise the different cultural orientations of offenders.**

The three cultural orientations pointed out by James Waldram: the traditional, bicultural and Euro-Canadian orientated/aculturated (and they are not mutually exclusive) will affect the progress and healing process of the Eskwewuk at the *Healing Lodge*. To properly meet the individual healing needs of each Eskwewuk, program facilitators and Elders will need to provide services relevant to the cultural orientation of each participant. A failure to address this issue may have negative

consequences for the Eskwewuk. Different healing programs and policies may be required to meet the diverse needs of each group.

- **Recognize the Eskwewuk are both victims *and* offenders**

Acknowledging this dual membership is not meant to detract from the responsibility that must be placed upon each Eskwewuk for her role in any criminal behaviour.

Instead it is meant to set the stage for the perspective that must be employed in the development and delivery of programs and community infrastructures that will facilitate lasting and relevant healing.

- **Collaborate healing practices with First Nations communities**

It was stated on numerous occasions, that if a woman chooses to return to her community (reserve), she is going back to dysfunction, abuse and turmoil. There must be a concerted effort made to assist all First Nations communities, at the grassroots level, with healing and recovery. Although this will be faced with many practical obstacles, it must be encouraged from within.

- **Recognize the abilities of each community**

First Nations communities in Canada are at various stages of unrest and healing.

Some have been more successful than others in addressing the issues that plague them and building healthier communities. The lack of programs and services for

Eskwewuk may be a reflection of the communities need to address areas they believe more salient for the overall good of their community, such as sexual abuse, drug and alcohol addiction, and residential schools. This is not to say that they are abandoning

the Eskwewuk; rather they are attacking the legacies that have left their members in conflict with the criminal justice system. In other words, they are creating “healed” communities to which the Eskwewuk can return.

- **Control over *Okimaw Ohci* (and First Nations justice) is to be encouraged and supported**

Corrections Canada continues to control *Okimaw Ohci*, notwithstanding the increased sensitivity provided to the needs of Eskwewuk. A gradual transition of control to the Nekaneet (or other) community using section 81 of the *CCRA* is one incremental method to assert control. “Tinkering” with the Canadian justice system and its components (as exemplified by *Okimaw Ohci*) should be abandoned.

- **Funding and assistance for the development/improvement of community infrastructures should be provided**

Research indicates the lack of support and or ability of communities to deliver services for released offenders. There must be great vigilance on the part of the government to provide the initial resources to assist communities in the development of post-release services for Eskwewuk. Collaborative partnerships should be initially sought to assist First Nations communities with the development and implementation of services until such time arises that they are strong enough to deliver these services themselves.

- **Training of staff must maintain a level of consistency**

Every person who is employed by Corrections Canada must participate in the thirteen week “Correctional Officer Training Program.” (COTP). This entails several

components, all with the intent of enabling an individual to successfully fulfil the requirements of their position. *Okimaw Ohci* has added a **healing component** to the COTP. It is absolutely essential that this aspect of training be maintained and provided for all new employees of the *Lodge*. Deviation from this will affect the consistency of treatment for the Eskwewuk and may affect the healing process and relationship between staff and Eskwewuk.

- **Maintain current level of First Nations female staff**

It will be important to maintain the current level (sixty percent) of First Nations staff at the *Lodge*. It is acknowledged that this may be difficult, if not impossible, at times due to staff turnover, qualifications, the isolated nature of the facility. Incentives may have to be developed and/or targeting First Nations communities for a pool of possible candidates may alleviate some of these concerns. Of equal importance is the number of female staff employed at the *Lodge*. The nature of this facility and the histories of the Eskwewuk, make it essential that female staff comprise the majority of staff. To illustrate, when the *Lodge* first opened, there were only two male employees out of a total twenty-seven.

- **The development of a new way of looking at Canadian corrections**

The philosophies, beliefs and practices encapsulated by the *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge* should be considered as a new direction for Canadian corrections. There is the capacity to transfer the practices at this institution to all correctional facilities in Canada (provincial/federal and male). The shift towards restorative and transformative justice currently evidenced strengthens this possibility.

Future Research

The exploratory nature of this research, combined with the recent inauguration of *Okimaw Ohci*, dictates the need for additional research in several areas. Although difficult to prioritize, some of the areas are as follows:

- **An examination of cultural orientation in carceral settings and its relation/effect on women**

Research and studies conducted in this area (specifically James Waldram's work) have failed to address the question of cultural orientation (acculturated, bi-cultural, traditional) and the needs of First Nations women. Assumptions have been made that all women at *Okimaw Ohci* are starting at the same 'cultural place' and therefore have the same needs and understandings as one another. A qualitative analysis should be conducted employing a representative sample of Eskwewuk who have spent time at *Okimaw Ohci*, to determine their needs and cultural orientation.

- **Access to *Okimaw Ohci* must be obtained**

A shortcoming of this research lays in the inability to gain access to the *Healing Lodge* to conduct field research. An in-depth examination of program delivery, security measures, layout of the *Healing Lodge*, interaction between staff and Eskwewuk and so forth will be a necessary component. This will enable a comparison between this institution and the Prison for Women. Depending on the availability of similar information about the other regional facilities, further comparative analysis should be made.

- **Survey Questionnaires and Focus Groups of key stakeholders**

It is of utmost importance to conduct interviews, focus groups of past and present key stakeholders (correctional officers, program facilitators, elders, Eskwewuk and administrators) involved with the *Healing Lodge*, the Prison for Women and/or the other regional facilities. This will enable a comparison of experiences and assist in evaluating the success of this institution.

- **Examination of other “Healing Centres”**

At the present time, other “Healing Centres,” in other Canadian provinces and the United States, exist that are connected with the correctional enterprise. An examination of these institutions will enable the administrators and policy-makers to make any necessary policy and program modifications to the *Healing Lodge*. A relationship between *Okimaw Ohci* and the other healing centres should be established to allow for a sharing of information and to assist the centres in avoiding the same mistakes. This network will benefit the administrators as well as the offenders incarcerated in these centres.

- **Follow-up of Eskwewuk who attended *Lodge***

Longitudinal research will be necessary to determine if the desired effects of the *Healing Lodge* were fulfilled. It is important to note that recidivism cannot be the sole or primary factor employed to determine the success of the *Lodge*. Instead, a holistic set of criteria must be developed that is consistent and faithful to First Nations

values. All attempts should be made to follow up incrementally: at 6 months after release, one year, five years, ten years.

- **Re-establishing of harmony and a return to community**

One of the underlying tenets for construction of *Okimaw Ohci* was that it facilitate the healing of the Eskwewuk in a manner that was culturally appropriate and sensitive while at the same time assisting in their return to their communities upon their release. Research will need to be conducted to determine if *Okimaw Ohci* was able to fulfil both of these objectives. The issues raised relating to cultural orientation speaks to the difficulty of providing culturally appropriate healing, as this was never operationalized. Moreover, it will need to be determined whether or not the women were able to successfully reintegrate to their communities once released or if additional work is required while the Eskwewuk are incarcerated to facilitate this.

- **Feasibility Study to examine transfer of control to First Nations communities**

It is acknowledged that this will be a difficult task. The Nekaneet community may not want to assume control for the *Healing Lodge* at any point in the future. It must be their decision to make. Should the Nekaneet community decide not to have control for the *Healing Lodge* transferred to them, numerous questions will need to be answered: Should another community assume this control? Should a committee/advisory group, made up of various First Nations community members be developed? Should this committee be a National, Provincial or regional one? Recognising that each First Nations community is prioritising social issues and addressing them at their own pace,

this will affect the transfer of power for the *Healing Lodge*. This transfer cannot be forced upon a community nor can it be rushed.

- **Is *Okimaw Ohci* a viable correctional model for First Nations peoples?**

At the time of completing this thesis, *Okimaw Ohci* has been in operation for four years. Due to the indigenisation of this facility, its focus on culture and access of First Nations women, research will need to be conducted to determine if it progresses in a manner that continues to respect First Nations peoples. Similarly, it will need be determined if access to *Okimaw Ohci* (as noted in the previous discussion of selection criteria) and treatment remains equitable.

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Appendix A

Total Sentenced Admissions to Facilities during the Fiscal Year^{66 67}

British Columbia	Females	Aboriginal Women	Percentage Aboriginal
1980-1981	388	---	---
1981-1982	336	---	---
1982-1983	527	---	---
1983-1984	812	---	---
1984-1985	581	180	31%
1985-1986	517	134	26%
1986-1987	627	182	29%
1987-1988	703	229	33%
1988-1989	632	197	31%
1989-1990	662	180	27%
1990-1991	508	138	27%
1991-1992	514	175	34%
1992-1993	664	188	28%
1993-1994	885	193	22%

Saskatchewan			
1980-1981	509	---	---
1981-1982	506	---	---
1982-1983	531	---	---
1983-1984	583	---	---
1984-1985	617	508	82%
1985-1986	573	507	88%
1986-1987	599	524	87%
1987-1988	718	629	88%
1988-1989	776	683	88%
1989-1990	776	660	85%
1990-1991	830	716	86%
1991-1992	783	666	85%
1992-1993	779	647	83%
1993-1994	778	680	87%

⁶⁶ Although these numbers do not seem to match those put out in the document "Basic Facts About Corrections" it is important to remember that the samples to which the numbers are derived are not identical. The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics was counting *sentenced admissions* to all facilities whereas "Basic Facts About" was tabulating the numbers of "on-registered" offenders during a particular fiscal year. The importance of these statistics, albeit their difference is the *marked over-representation* of First Nations women. This fact cannot be ignored.

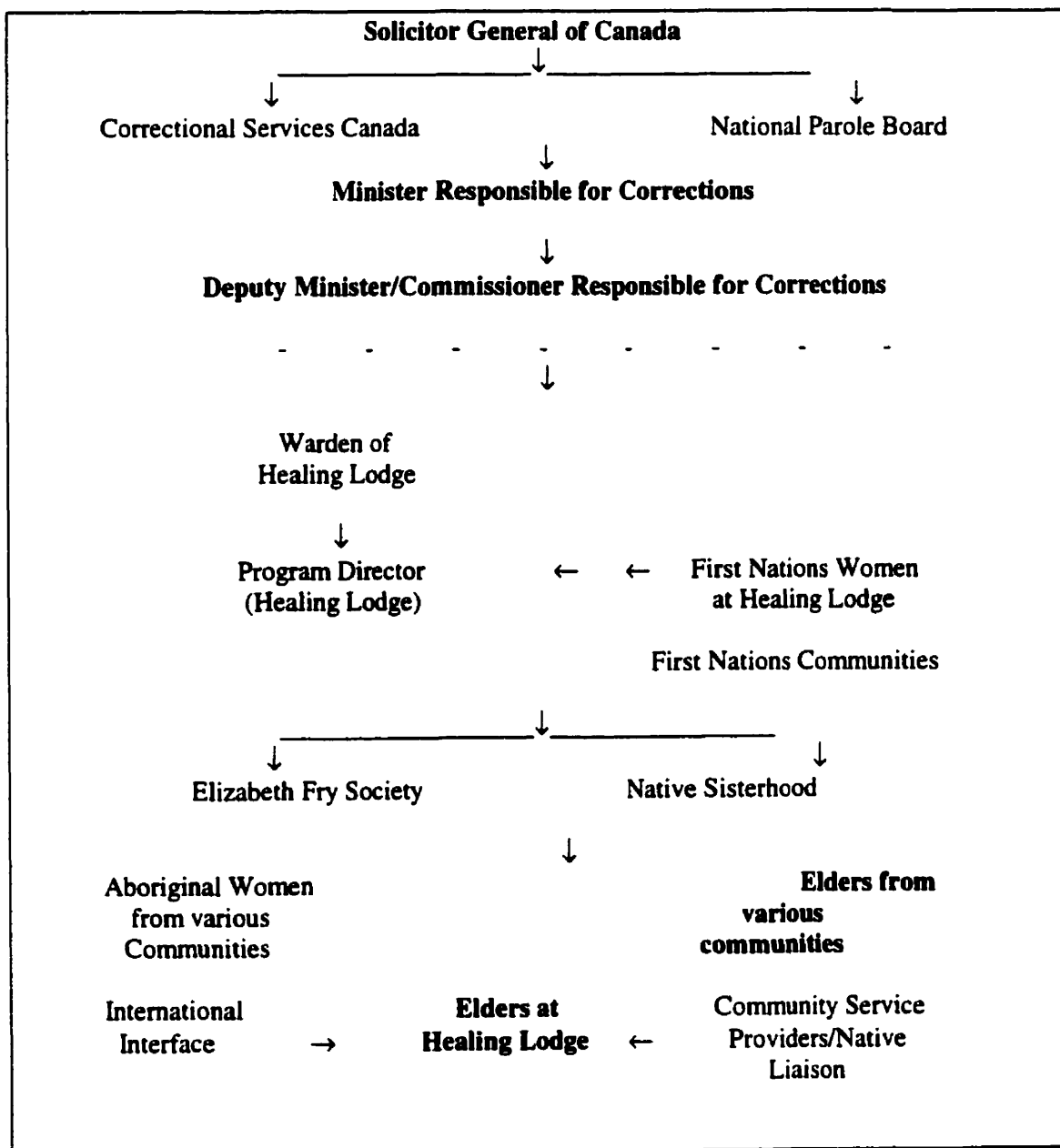
⁶⁷ These three provinces were chosen in order to provide a general idea of the numbers of First Nations women who are sentenced to correctional institutions.

Ontario	Females	Aboriginal Women	Percentage Aboriginal
1980-1981	4,015	---	---
1981-1982	2,973	---	---
1982-1983	3,381	---	---
1983-1984	3,410	---	---
1984-1985	3,152	617	19.5%
1985-1986	3,284	544	16.5%
1986-1987	2,875	493	17%
1987-1988	3,148	537	17%
1988-1989	3,293	557	16.9%
1989-1990	3,520	503	14%
1990-1991	3,501	450	12.8%
1991-1992	3,501	450	12.8%
1992-1993	3,501	450	12.8%
1993-1994	3,310	328	9.9%

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. (1996). "Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Incarceration Rates in Canada." Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

Appendix B

Decision-Making Schemata



----- = this denotes that a portion of the chain of command has been removed for the purpose of simplification.

Appendix C

ESKWEWUK PROGRAMMING INTERVIEW ⁶⁸

ESKWEWUK PROGRAMMING FOR HEALING AT THE OKIMAW OHCI HEALING LODGE

In partial fulfilment of a Master of Arts degree (Criminology) at Simon Fraser University, the researcher is interested in the opinions of First Nations women offenders at the *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge* with regards to programming based on the (culturally and spiritually relevant) idea of holistic healing.

Your participation in this survey and following interview(s) is greatly appreciated. However, your participation in the interview is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time. The information obtained from this interview and any subsequent discussions will remain strictly confidential. It is not required or necessary that you disclose any information that could identify you.

Identification

Subject Code: _____

1. Name (optional): _____
2. Pseudonym (please chose a name that you wish to be referred to as for future reference): _____
3. Institution and province transferred from:

Demography

4. Date of birth: _____
mm/dd/yy
5. Age: _____

⁶⁸ This questionnaire is a modified version of a questionnaire developed by Curt T. Griffiths and Cheryl A. Brown (1996) entitled "Native Offender Needs Assessment (NOVA)"

6. Sex: female

7. Are you: Status ____
Non-Status ____
Treaty ____
Non-Treaty ____
Metis ____

8. Are you currently registered under the *Indian Act*? Yes ____
No ____

9. First Language: _____

10. Level of education you have attained: _____

11. Religion (please specify): _____

12. Do you belong to a band/First Nation? Yes ____
No ____

13. What is the name of your band/First Nation? _____

14. Province/State of Birth: _____

15. Citizenship: _____

16. Were you born on a reserve? Yes ____
No ____

17. Have you ever lived on a reserve? (a) Yes? How many years? ____
Which reserve? ____
(b) No? Which community? ____

18. Where did the offence for which you have been incarcerated occur?
On-reserve ____
Off-reserve ____
Other: _____

19. Before you were sentenced, what was your relationship with other members of the First Nations community? (For example, Did you have friends in the community? Did you use First Nations services, friendship centres, etc.?) _____

20. Were you involved with First Nations traditions and activities at the former institution? (For example, the sweatlodge, pow wows, cleansing/smudging, smoke house, Native Sisterhood, etc.) _____

21. If no to the above question, what stopped you from becoming involved? _____

22. Can you speak any First Nations language well enough to carry on a conversation? Which one(s)? 1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

23. What language do you speak most often when you are with your family (partner, children)? _____

24. What language do you speak most often when you are with your uncles, aunts parents, elders, etc.? _____

Specificity of Holistic Healing Programs

25. While in the previous institution, were there any culturally and spiritually relevant programs available to assist you in your healing process? Yes _____

No _____

26. Did you participate in any of these programs? Did you benefit from them? _____

27. What programs are you currently participating in? _____

28. What is your opinion of these programs _____

29. Who do you think should be involved in the development and facilitation of these programs? _____

30. Have you been asked to make suggestions in the development or content of the existing programs? Yes _____
No _____

Comment: _____

31. If you have not been asked, would you like to? Yes _____
No _____
No Opinion _____

If yes, what suggestions would you make? _____

32. Do you find the atmosphere/environment of the *Healing Lodge* better?

Yes ___

No ___

No Opinion ___

Comment: _____

33. Are there any programs or spiritual/cultural ceremonies not being permitted, which are supposed to be? _____

34. Do you think the current (state) of healing programs is satisfactory? _____

35. Do you see a need for changes or modifications to the programs? Why or why not?

36. Are the security measures as strict here as the institution you are from? _____

37. Is there a greater sensitivity to your needs as a First Nations woman-for healing of the mind, body and soul-here at the *Healing Lodge*? _____

38. Do you plan on returning to your home community when you are released?

Yes ___

No ___

39. Does your home community offer any First Nations programs that you can use when you are released from here? _____

Are there any addition comments you would like to make? _____

Appendix D

ELDERS QUESTIONNAIRE

ESKWEWUK PROGRAMMING FOR HEALING AT THE OKIMAW OHCI HEALING LODGE

In partial fulfilment of a Master of Arts degree (Criminology) at Simon Fraser University, the researcher is interested in the opinions of First Nations women offenders at the *Okimaw Ochi Healing Lodge* with regards to programming based on the (culturally and spiritually relevant) idea of holistic healing.

Your participation in this survey and following interview(s) is greatly appreciated. However, your participation in the interview is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time. The information obtained from this interview and any subsequent discussions will remain strictly confidential. It is not required or necessary that you disclose any information that could identify you.

Demography

1. Date of birth: _____
mm/dd/yy

2. Age: _____

3. Sex: Male ____
 Female ____

4. Are you: Status ____
 Non-Status ____
 Treaty ____
 Non-Treaty ____
 Metis ____

5. First Language: _____

6. Religion (please specify): _____

7. What band/First Nation do you belong to (Please indicate the province as well)?

8. Province/State of Birth:

9. Citizenship:

[illegible]

11. How many years have you been an Elder in the community?

Specificity of Holistic Healing Programs

12. What is your role here at the *Healing Lodge*?

Table 1

13. How often are you able to visit the *Lodge*?

14. How long do you usually stay for each visit?

15. What are the most common reasons the women seek your knowledge and teachings?

16. What teachings do you use/focus on to assist in the healing process of the women?

17. Does the cultural orientation (traditional, bi-cultural or assimilated) affect the way you deliver the traditional teachings and healing practices? ☐ Yes
☐ No

If yes, how does cultural orientation affect it? _____

18. Are there any changes to the current structure of the *Healing Lodge* that you feel are necessary to allow the women to heal? Please Explain. _____

19. Do you visit other federal institutions to help First Nations prisoners heal?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Are there any additional comments you would like to make? _____

Appendix E

ADMINISTRATORS QUESTIONNAIRE

ESKWEWUK PROGRAMMING FOR HEALING AT THE OKIMAW OHCI HEALING LODGE

In partial fulfilment of a Master of Arts degree (Criminology) at Simon Fraser University, the researcher is interested in the opinions of First Nations women offenders at the *Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge* with regards to programming based on the (culturally and spiritually relevant) idea of holistic healing.

Your participation in this survey and following interview(s) is greatly appreciated. However, your participation in the interview is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time. The information obtained from this interview and any subsequent discussions will remain strictly confidential. It is not required or necessary that you disclose any information that could identify you.

Demography

1. Date of birth: _____
mm/dd/yy

2. Age: _____

3. Sex: Male ____
 Female ____

4. Are you: Status ____
 Non-Status ____
 Treaty ____
 Non-Treaty ____
 Metis ____
 Non-First Nations ____

5. First Language: _____

6. Religion (please specify): _____

7. What band/First Nation do you belong to (Please indicate the province as well)?

8. Province/State of Birth: _____

9. Citizenship: _____

[illegible]

11. Have you ever lived on a reserve? (a) Yes? How many years? _____
Which reserve? _____
(b) No? Which community? _____

12. Can you speak any First Nations language well enough to carry on a conversation? Which one(s)? 1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Specificity of Holistic Healing Programs

13. What traditional cultural and spiritual practices are you familiar with? _____

14. Do you actively participate in First Nations cultural and spiritual practices?

Yes _____
No _____

15. Which ones? _____

16. Have you held a position with Corrections Canada in the past? Please specify _____

16. How much time is devoted to culturally relevant programming at the *Healing Lodge* compared to time allotted for CSC programming? _____

17. Are there any First Nations relevant programs you would like to see implemented here? _____

18. What is the process/criteria used to select women for admission to the *Healing Lodge*? _____

19. Under what circumstances would a woman's application be rejected? _____

20. What factor does security play in the decision to allow certain traditional First Nations programs and/or practices? Please explain. _____

21. Do you consult or seek the advise of the Elders before making any decisions related to the women? Yes _____

No _____

22. If "yes" to the above question, on what specific types of issues do you consult with the Elders? _____

23. What attempts are made to establish a link with the women's home community?

24. What programs are available in the home communities that will facilitate the transition from the healing process here at the *Lodge* to continued progress once in the community?

Are there any addition comments you would like to make?

Appendix F

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT BY SUBJECTS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT OR EXPERIMENT

The University and the individual conducting this project subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort and safety of subjects. This form and the information it contains are given to you for your own protection and full understanding of the procedures, and risks of the proposed research. Your signature on this form will signify that you have received a document that describes the procedures, possible risks, and benefits of this research project, that you have received an adequate opportunity to consider the information in the document, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the project.

Having been asked by **Melita Annie Caissie** of the Department of Criminology of Simon Fraser University to participate in a research project, I have read the procedures specified in the document.

I understand the procedures to be used in this experiment and the personal risks to me in taking part.

I understand that I may withdraw my participation in this study at any time.

I also understand that I may register any complaint that I might have about the project with the chief research named above or with **Dr. Margaret Jackson**, Director of the Graduate Department of Criminology, Simon Fraser University.

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon completion, by contacting:

Melita Annie Caissie
Simon Fraser University, Department of Criminology
8888 University Way
Burnaby, British Columbia
V5A 1S6

I have been informed that the research material will be held confident by the principal investigator.

I agree to participate by responding the questions provided in the questionnaire, except for those that I choose not to answer, as described in the document referred to above, which will be mailed to me. I agree to return the responses in the self-addressed, stamped envelop as soon as possible.

Name (please print):

Signature:

Date:

**ONCE SIGNED, A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM AND A SUBJECT
FEEDBACK FORM SHOULD BE PROVIDED TO YOU.**

Appendix G

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

SUBJECT FEEDBACK FORM *

Completion of this form is **OPTIONAL**, and is not a requirement of participation in the project. However, if you have served as a subject in a project and would care to comment on the procedures involved, you may complete the following form and send it to the Chair, University Research Ethics Review Committee. All information received will be treated in a strictly confidential manner.

Name of Principal Investigator _____

Title of Project: _____

Department/School/Faculty:

Did you sign an Informed Consent Form before participating in the project? _____

Were there significant deviations from the originally stated procedures? _____

I wish to comment on my involvement in the project that took place:

(Date/Place)

Comments: _____

Completion of this section is optional

Your name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

* This form should be sent to: Chair, University Ethics Review Committee,
c/o Vice-President, Research, Simon Fraser University, 8888 University Way, Burnaby,
B. C., V5A 1S6.

Appendix H

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

The following information describes the proposed procedure to obtain information from you.

Title of Project:

The Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge for Eskwewuk: Is Correctional Practice Consistent with Healing Practice?

Description of the procedures to be followed and a statement of the risks to the subjects and benefits of the research.

For this project, I will be asking you to answer some questions about yourself and your background. I am also interested in knowing what you think about the programs available to you at *Okimaw Ohci*. Any of the information you provide will be kept confidential and anonymous and so there will be no risks to you whatsoever. But, you do not have to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable with. The questions will take about one hour of your time to answer. If I have not provided you with enough space for your answer, please continue your answer on the back of the page.

The answers you provide me will be used to develop a new way for Corrections Canada to help you with your process and path of healing.

Megwetch for your time in helping me with this project.

All my relations,

Melita