

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

**Breaths of History**

by

Laura May Auger

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

GRADUATE DIVISION OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

CALGARY, ALBERTA

SEPTEMBER, 1999

© Laura May Auger 1999



National Library  
of Canada

Acquisitions and  
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale  
du Canada

Acquisitions et  
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

*Your file* *Votre référence*

*Our file* *Notre référence*

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-48360-6

**Canada**

## ABSTRACT

Aboriginal peoples, in particular Aboriginal women, live on a very wide ranging continuum within their own culture as well as in the Euro-Canadian culture. Problematic issues relating to aspects of Aboriginal peoples' lives, include socioeconomic status in the Canadian society and complex cultural differences. In addition, human lives have been compromised and denigrated by colonization or, through the attempted cultural genocidal processes that began with contact to the present day. This study examines the Aboriginal experience which is directly related to the historical experience of that attempt of cultural genocide.

The following research questions explore areas about the current thoughts and concerns of eight Aboriginal women: More specifically, can identifying a frame of reference within the oral history tradition of Aboriginal women be helpful in understanding one's sense of identity. The study method included interviewing eight Aboriginal women within the age range of twenty to approximately fifty-one years. The questionnaire was developed to elicit the knowledge and information pertaining to the experiences of these women.

The findings of this study indicate that all of the eight Aboriginal women interviewed follow their native culture innately whether consciously or unconsciously, in their decision-making process, direction, goals, and every day lives. Both the ancient and contemporary knowledge appeared intertwined in the lives and experiences of these women. That, in itself is a most humbling life lesson.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I offer my utmost respect and sincere thanks to the Aboriginal women who shared stories of strength, beauty and wisdom. Thank you for teaching me that our knowledge not only stems from, but also returns to the spirit of our ancient oral tradition.

I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr. Richard Hirabayashi, and my thesis committee members, Dr. Cecile DePass and Dr. Gregory Fouts for their role in the development of this thesis.

I am also grateful for the assistance and cooperation of the Buffalo Robe and Medicine Society, others involved in the collection of the data, and my friend Joyce Dene. Special gratitude is extended to the Bigstone Cree Education Authority and Bigstone Cree Nation for supporting my goals of achieving a Master of Arts in Education.

Special thanks to Marie Raymer and Martha Loeman, staff of the Graduate Division of Educational Research, for their technical assistance.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to my family, especially my beautiful daughter Raine Bo Jasmine Auger, who has been the impetus for much of my work. "You truly are a gift!" To my dear friend, Smokey, "Thank you for your unconditional love, support, and encouragement."

**DEDICATION**

**THIS THESIS IS DEDICATED,  
WITH THE DEEPEST RESPECT AND ADMIRATION, TO MY MOTHER,  
O-SOH-KA-POH-SKOA, ROSE C. AUGER**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL PAGE .....	ii
ABSTRACT .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iv
DEDICATION .....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	vi
LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
PROLOGUE .....	x
CHAPTER ONE: BREATHS OF HISTORY - INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1    Eternal Mingling Auras .....	2
1.2    A Northern Brush .....	4
CHAPTER TWO: FIRE DANCES AND FLICKERS - THE STUDY .....	5
2.1    Western Chinook Winds: Learning Process .....	6
2.2    Assumptions about Aboriginal Women .....	9
2.3    Research Questions .....	13
2.4    Methodology .....	14
2.5    Aboriginal/Non-Aboriginal Context .....	14
CHAPTER THREE: COMPASSIONATE OFFERINGS - THE ORAL TRADITION .....	16
3.1    Language and Stories .....	20
3.2    Ancient Knowledge .....	21
3.3    Understanding Changes .....	23
CHAPTER FOUR: VENERATION OF THE SOUL - THE PEOPLE'S VOICE .....	26
4.1    Self-Identity .....	27
4.2    Language(s) Spoken .....	30
4.3    Family Background .....	31
4.4    Educational Experiences .....	33
4.5    Oral History and Traditions .....	35
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMONING SOUTHERN SAGES - CONCLUSION .....	40
5.1    Discussion: Research Questions .....	40
5.2    Summoning Southern Sages: Final Commentary .....	42
EPILOGUE .....	43
REFERENCES .....	45

APPENDIX I: BREATHS OF HISTORY QUESTIONNAIRE .....	47
APPENDIX II: RESOUNDING INTRINSIC CHANTS: INTERVIEW DATA .....	50
Interview with A .....	51
Interview with B .....	55
Interview with C .....	59
Interview with D .....	64
Interview with E .....	69
Interview with F .....	73
Interview with G .....	78
Interview with H .....	82
APPENDIX III: INTRINSIC CHANTS: ETHICS .....	88

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Names .....	29
2. Languages .....	30
3. Family Background .....	31
4. Formal Education .....	33
5. Oral History .....	35
6. Role Models .....	36
7. Age .....	38



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Circle of Life .....	3

## **PROLOGUE**

### **Breaths of History**

Witness eternal mingling auras  
Bundle wilderness unsown.  
Enchanting fire dances and flickers  
In flames of compassionate offerings.  
Enticing Western Chinook Winds share  
Eastern beginnings shone ochre.  
Sprouting sweet grasses of verdure shades  
Gently burnt to venerate the soul.  
Bone amulets softly whispering history in  
Adoration of the Noble Beings.  
Prairie Dogs riddle human formality  
Whilst magic imitates the unknown.  
A soothing voice breathes in  
Remnants of the Northern Brush.  
Resounding intrinsic chants  
Summon empathetic Southern Sages.

Hiy! Hiy!

L. Auger, 1995.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **BREATHS OF HISTORY**

Life's path brings enlightenment of both the old and the new insights that give rise to the level of consciousness and bringing with it a renewal of vision. That vision reveals both the beauty and the tragedy in life through its breaths of history. The many people of many paths have crossed. In that crossing, countless events have occurred that affect all peoples of the world. The truth is, we live our history, in our minds and, in our hearts but, most importantly in our souls.

The philosophy of Aboriginal culture lies in its history and further, as told by its inhabitants in their stories. Both the Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian cultures have storytellers. Together they bare witness to the historical oral and written accounts over the span of our memories as earthly inhabitants. The stories have vibrant color, delicious flavor, tragedy and even perhaps a little magic, but most importantly it must have truth. The sharing of stories is ancient and is a universal shared value across all cultures. For that reason, I have chosen to concentrate on the storytelling as a method of sharing.

Another reason, is that stories comprise one of the main strands found while conducting this research. Stories and the telling of those stories is a universal strand that will take us on a gratifying journey simply because there are far more similarities than there are differences among humanity. Also, with the use of stories, I hope to illustrate, within the limitations of this written tradition some aspects of Aboriginal history and oral tradition. Not

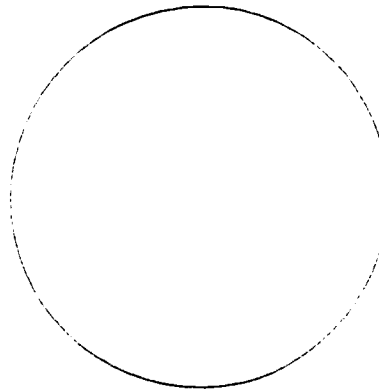
only in the telling of stories, but also in the examination of the content of the stories, one will find the essence of Aboriginal culture. We all have stories.

### **1.1 Mingling Eternal Auras**

Aboriginal culture adheres to life processing, rather than an examination of fragmented or isolated parts. This method of examining parts in isolation does not allow for an accurate portrayal of Native views which are rooted in a wholistic perspective. It asks or rather demands, that the Aboriginal world view be fitted into a foreign perspective. Instead, a more accurate portrayal would specifically address aspects of the ancient oral tradition. In the spirit of this tradition a philosophical view of Aboriginal peoples must be brought to light by the Aboriginal peoples themselves. This Native world view continues to be carried onward in the cyclical construct through the use of the ancient traditions. It reveals how all beings in all realities are related and interconnected. Leroy Little Bear shares his views on this topic in the following quotation:

“Many Native people think in terms of cyclicity. Time is not a straight line. It is a circle. Every day is not a new day, but the same day repeating it self. There is no need to name each day a different name. You only need one name: day. This philosophy is a result of a direct relationship with the macrocosm. The sun is round; the moon is round; a day is a cycle – daylight followed by night; the seasons follow the same cycle year after year. A characteristic if cyclical thinking is that it is wholistic, in the same way that a circle is a whole. A cyclical philosophy does not lend itself easily to dichotomies of categorization, nor fragmentation, nor polarizations, whereas linear thinking lends itself to all of the above. Linear thinking, also, lends itself to singularity. For example, “there is only one great spirit”, “only one true rule”, “only one true answer”. These philosophical ramifications of Western habitual thought result in misunderstanding wholistic concepts. Westerners relate themselves to only one aspect of the whole at a time” (Little Bear 1982 101-102).

In examining and comparing the two world views inclusive of history, political structure and language, it will become clear that the definite differences account for the complexities we now experience in society. This research tells of the life Breathed into History through the lives of eight Aboriginal women. There are many variables to consider in the way and the shape their lives have become formulated. Those ways are part of their everyday life in the way that they choose to walk through this life. This brief sharing of their lives and their continuous journey can be symbolically represented within the Circle of Life (See Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Circle of Life

The Oral Tradition provides the main means of cultural transmission of the Aboriginal world view. Tapping into that history through use of stories provides the framework for that cultural transmission to occur. It outlines the role formation and stages people take on in

their lives. Some possible roles could be identified as: being, initiate, practitioner, and finally teacher. Knowledge of the protocol is delivered through stories, in the informal learnings. In the process, taking one's self, from a new being coming into the world on through to the teacher in the circle of life is a continuous process.

### **1.2 A Northern Brush**

Diversity can be found between and within cultures. Aboriginal women live on a very wide ranging continuum within Western society and within their own nations. In order to fully understand the current climate of Aboriginal Women and the areas directly relating to their lives, history must be examined. From those places in history will come the stories that illuminate a place for understanding, compassion and love. Those attributes will best serve the women themselves in helping them to formulate and assert themselves with clarity of vision in understanding themselves and their history.

The following is an excerpt into my personal experience in contemplating life and the nature of connectedness with the grandmother bear. GGRRRRRR...Masque growls hungrily venturing along a path in search of the day's food, ggrrrrrrllll. "Nohkom, enohti-iskihten awiina masque? Grandmother, I want to know, who is bear? Gggggrrrr...bear digs up the soft sweet vetch roots in the vast Northern woodlands. Those nourishing roots keep the hunger away for a short while. Roots that are equally important to the body as is, the ancient knowledge that nourishes the soul. Nohkom says, Maskwa is your relative and maybe yourself, if you follow yourself and your dreams close enough. Maskwa provides sustenance for herself and the likes of all being, it is her duty. We all have duties. Part of my duty is to

tell a stories about Aboriginal women.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **FIRE DANCES AND FLICKERS: THE STUDY**

The Aboriginal experience today is directly related to their historical experience. For example, an understanding of the colonization or cultural genocide process that Aboriginal peoples have undergone over the last five-hundred years is difficult, but very necessary. Issues such as loss of identity that stem from within that process and definitely affects women, their families and communities today. That loss changes the dynamics of the culture, the family system and ultimately the identity of Aboriginal peoples. Identity is central to the way one views themselves and others. In our understanding of history there is a place for grieving as well as for joy.

Examination of the many numerous and wondrous gifts that the Aboriginal culture offers, is essential for understanding and appreciation of such culture. From this place we find strength, wisdom and clarity. My research has found many strands of these gifts that continue to be present in modern times. The challenge and the task are in clarifying both the positive and negative components throughout history, and transferring those to create an appropriate means that provides clear direction toward living a more fulfilled life with a sense of well

being. The question explored during this research is: What contributing cultural influences are helpful to Aboriginal women in defining their sense of identity, their level of self-esteem and their role in life?

Gaining knowledge of both the old and the new, and the intertwining of the two over time is humbling. No longer is it permissible to play into the part of being the victim, or being romanticized as a noble savage, or even feel persecuted. It is time to dismiss the Indian Agent of his duties and to reconnect with our ancestors and the knowledge of ancestral waves that bring about the changes required to live happier, healthier lives. Calling on those that can bring about this change, is to call on Big Bear, Geronimo, and others who do the conjuring in the rhythmic beats of the heart and in the wind of change.

One afternoon my friend and I sat listening to the round dance singers chanting rhythmically. Leaning over almost with the drumbeat, she asked, "Why do cowboys have square dances Indians have round dances?" My response was to just laugh out loud. Throughout that day, and even today, her question stretches a grin across my face. Her insightful inquiry was to me deeply philosophical. The round dance is aligned with the circle, the circle symbolically like the sun, the moon, the drum and within that, the concept of reciprocity. Cycles upon cycles, cycles of life, death, life cycles. There is beauty in that. Here, the journey of discovery of that beauty in our lives and in ourselves may be the toughest journey in this life. Further, the role that women play today has significantly changed, and whatever affects one, will affect all.

## **2.1 Western Chinook Winds: Learning Process.**



To clarifying ways of learning, I will comment on the different types of formal and informal learning for Aboriginal peoples in Western society. Informal education is the learning that takes place outside of structured learning environments like schools. This kind of learning is extremely important, and comes from the primary care-givers, parents and extended family in the home. Here, one may learn their mother tongue along with the pattern developments in and around the home.

Formal education is received in a structured educational environment such as, a residential or public school. This learning is very structured to meet very specific goals that can be useful in Western society. Formal education is important for career development, and also for social control in Western society. This is where one learns the rules of the dominant society in order to become a participant or player in that society. There is, however, a very definite problem with the formal and informal traditional learning when it comes to aboriginal peoples. With the implementation of residential schools, the primary educational goal was to inculcate the dominant society's values. Robert A. Trennert (1975) writes about Aboriginal girls who attended residential schools and explains that:

“a basic premise of this educational effort rested on the necessary elimination of Indian culture” (224).

However, this attempt was unsuccessful simply because aboriginal people still have their values and beliefs. Despite the residential school period, many Native people continue to speak their language and continue their Native lifestyle. However, change is inevitable and western culture has had some influence in those changes. Some of the changes from this experience have caused noticeable difficulties.

The quality of education accorded Aboriginal people was inadequate. For example from this educational experience Native people speak in broken English. They may also speak in broken Cree. Individuals with both conditions experience difficulty in either Western or Cree society, or both simultaneously. Other individuals speak their Native language well enough to become immersed back into their community and experience success but may not be able to compete in Western society. Native individuals who only speak English may not be able to become a part of Native society. This person may also have poor English skills that this inadequate formal education has provided. These scenarios are indicative of the current situation for many, and clearly place Native women in the difficult situation of becoming marginalized. This situation forces women to sit on the peripheries of society. Education, or the quality of education is likely a strong contributing factor to the following description of Native people in society:

“Canada’s Native peoples rank at the very bottom of the economic and social scale of ethnic groups in Canada. The income of the average Indian family is only one-half to two-thirds that of the average Canadian family. According to the federal government statistics, the average Indian’s life expectancy is approximately ten years shorter than the average Canadian’s” (Francis, Jones, Smith 1992 379).

The quality of education achieved by Native peoples is multi-faceted; and has created an environment of high suicide rates, rampant substance abuse, and lack of self worth. The ultimate result is often in tragedy. The overwhelming circumstances of this situation has enormous ramifications.

Aboriginal women have a wholistic philosophy that is valuable and can be beneficial to their world. This wholistic philosophy is embedded in the language and continues to be part

of the Aboriginal culture generations after such problems as impending loss of language through cultural genocide. To find answers to these circumstances and the assumptions held by society requires further examination of the whole picture. Some of these assumptions are listed below.

## **2.2 Assumptions About Aboriginal Women.**

**The first assumption: Aboriginal women, marginalized in Western society, has its roots in history.** The matriarchal system used in earlier Native traditional systems is not viewed as valuable or credible by Western society. Little regard has been awarded the Aboriginal peoples, thus women for their numerous contributions that began initially with nursing the newcomers back to health in their critical time of need. Women played a significant role in creating opportunities for the forthcoming alliances with the Europeans upon their arrival to what they came to know as, the New World. For Native people this was not the New World, it was their birthright. It was the New World to the newcomers. The known Oral Historical narrate of Tribal and Intertribal alliances that were well established before the newcomers arrived was by no means, declared congenial. It was real life in the Americas. However, new alliances with the Newcomers would create many new circumstances and conditions. One of the conditions that affected Native women and thus their families arises from the Indian Act:

“One of the most common ways of losing Indian status was through intermarriage. Under Section 12.(1)(b) of the *Indian Act*, any legally Indian female who married a non-Indian male lost Indian status for herself and for her children. On the other hand, if an Indian male married a non-Indian female, the female became legally Indian as did any offspring that may have resulted” (Frideres 1988 11).

Further to this, are the amendments that were made to the Indian Act through Bill C-31 in 1985. This legislation was made to alleviate the sexual discrimination of Native women who were disenfranchised prior to that date. Unfortunately, the redefinition served to further complicate an already complicated situation. It introduced a redefinition of who is an Indian and affected the status of Native people in terms of land and rights. At the core of this issue is, the ownership of land. Who owns the land? That question is unanswered to this day. If one looks back far enough, history will tell of the origin of the treaties as an agreement without reference to land at all:

**“ORIGIN OF TREATIES** The initial agreements between the Indian and the government have been called “Friendship and Peace” treaties and were carried out in the Maritime area. These pre-confederation treaties generally dealt with military and political relations and did not involve specific land transfers, annuities, or compensation for rights taken away” (Frideres 1988 99).

This issue of land includes the premise of white superiority which is the basis of racism. History tells that story also, the written accounts of the newcomers observations of the Indians in the new world were very descriptive. Any recapitulating of those accounts serve only to promote further racism. It is a well told story.

**The second assumption: Aboriginal women have a near total cultural loss stemming from cultural genocide, which can be traced in the historical process.** There are strands of the Aboriginal ancient traditions that are present in the current political system that has become misappropriated. Women’s significant role within the structure of their own tradition and their own laws have been greatly affected mainly through ignorance on the part of the male historians. This treatment adds to the issue of exclusion in Canadian society. It

is in the relationship of the oppressed and the oppressor that circumstances such as these are able to thrive and continue as they do. The process of colonialism must also be examined:

“We often know even less about the millions of American Indians surviving today, speaking their language and preserving at least some of their traditional knowledge. The Quechuas of Bolivia, the Crees of Canada, the Guaranis of Paraguay, the Yanomamos of Venezuela, the Hopis of the United States, the Zapotecs of Mexico...and a thousand other Indian Nations are not dead. They are only ignored” (Weatherford 1988 254-255).

Native culture has been and continues to be described and prescribed as eroded, impeded and “lost” when viewed from the outside, as Ahenakew points out in the following quotation:

“For the most part, the non-Indian world has based its view of Indian life on the summary depictions of outsiders-be they fur traders or missionaries, ethnographers or painters, novelists or film-makers. Even where they have been highly perceptive in their analysis (and paid attention, as some have, to the female condition), their pictures necessarily reflect the perspective of the outside observer” (Ahenakew 1992 18).

It is sad for Native people that those historians were unable to translate our wholistic philosophy as it was not within their frame of reference. Had history been told differently the contributions may have benefitted society greatly, and we may have lived in a kinder more harmonious world today. Women were part and parcel of those contributions, as transmitters of culture, teachers, healers and warriors.

**The third assumption: Aboriginal women have not attained valuable informal traditional education from their respective nations.** Aboriginal women have played a substantial role in the development of this society. They sacrificed much of themselves throughout history in sustaining their families and their societies. In the fur trade they were

helpful in creating goods and help to establish alliances for the development relations that would follow. This can be seen in the following quote:

“Several hundred Indian women also served as the Fort’s manual labourers, performing such heavy tasks as canoe building....They stripped the birch bark and made it pliable before sewing it onto frames with cedar roots and coating it with resin to make canoes. The canoes were large and capable of hauling several tons of supplies. The Indian women also served as wives to the voyageurs and the Scots, who also kept European wives and families back in Montreal. The three castes of Scots, French Canadians, and Indians were united only through their common marriages to Indian women” (Weatherford 1988 24).

With the knowledge and voice, Aboriginal women can provide a clear understanding of identify to the benefit of Native people today with regards to their life roles therein. I suggest that benefit would include identifying strands of the traditional value system that they continue to impart. They have a substantial role to play in transmitting the culture and knowledge of their ancestors. After all, women bring life into this world and must be recognized as is stated here: “Women are the doorway through which all life passes” (Monture-Angus 1995 263). This contribution may be looked at in the physical sense, there are also other ways. Imparting knowledge goes beyond the physical, and entails the heart and mind of life.

**The fourth assumption: Aboriginal women’s problems, given the same freedom as all women in society, has its roots in the legislated systemic discrimination of the Indian Act.** Aboriginal women live on a wide-ranging continuum within their own culture, but are profoundly affected by the foreign parameters of the paternalistic system. This system includes entrenching the Indian Act to govern and control Native women. The Indian Act identifies Aboriginal peoples, thus women as wards of the government. Under that Act,

Aboriginal women became vulnerable to being disenfranchised from their collective cultural group. Disenfranchisement is inclusive of the abrogation human rights as well as contributing to the cultural genocide which Aboriginal women continue to experience. In the process of isolating women, families and communities also suffer. Resulting in Aboriginal cultural parameters is a significantly reduced and restricted role for women. Further, the many continued erratic changes mean that only a select few are aware of these present conditions and circumstances. These changes affect both Native and Non-Native society in Canada. It is impossible to live in isolation. To fully appreciate an understanding of the historical process in terms of the inequalities, examination of the foreign oppressive methods in the appropriate context may be the initial stage of the healing.

### **2.3 Research Questions**

Some of the questions considered for this research emerged from the aboriginal world view (See Appendix 1). These cultural strands are still in existence, and could be incorporated wisely for use today. Aboriginal philosophy has become closely associated with the circle which suggests, no beginning or end rather, a continual process. This continual process operates on the following four levels, the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. This physical life process is only one part of the interconnected wholistic philosophy. In the following quotation, Richardson offers a perspective with respect to the issues at hand:

**“THE TENACITY OF THE CREE CULTURE** The Moses family, like many of others in James Bay, spans within its own experience a cultural change of oceanic proportions. In this it is probably typical of most Cree families. Yet any easy assumption that the culture is dead should be resisted: for appearances are not always what they seem, and few Cree people have been really detached from the hunting,

culture and the values it embodies. Throughout North America, the Indians have been treated as a disappearing people; yet nowhere have they disappeared. Somehow they are still around, and more vigorous then ever” (Richardson 1991 338).

It is in the examination of the whole picture of Native life that the following questions were developed and in an attempt to capture the valuable ancient strands of knowledge about Aboriginal women and their culture:

1. Can identifying a frame of reference in the value system of Aboriginal women be helpful in understanding the self or self identity?
2. Is it possible to identify the background of Aboriginal traditions?
3. In doing so, in what way does it influence Aboriginal Women’s self esteem?
4. Can Aboriginal traditional ways of life be beneficial for today’s Aboriginal women within the society on reserve, or in Western society?

#### **2.4 Methodology**

The study sample included interviewing a total of eight Aboriginal women ranging in age from twenty to approximately fifty-one. Although federal classification of Indian status significantly affects the lives of Aboriginal women, the more important information sought was in identifying strands of the ancient traditions in continued use today. Therefore, the interviewees were not asked for this specific information in the interviews. However, with the information given, it is possible to determine their Indian status that was useful in retrospect. The taped and transcribed interviews include women recognized as Aboriginal women within their collective cultural group. With regards to ethics, see Appendix III.

The questionnaire (see Appendix I) was developed to elicit the knowledge and information pertaining to the experience of Aboriginal women in the targeted areas of identity and subject’s definition of happiness or success, role models, historical and genealogical ancestry, formal and informal educational experience, knowledge of Native language, rituals



and practices and, finally perception of personal health in a broad sense.

### **2.5 Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Context**

The Aboriginal Context: A recognized Aboriginal member living within the Aboriginal community with knowledge and experience of their cultural group and dynamics therein. The

Non-Aboriginal Context: A recognized Aboriginal member residing in the Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal community. This will include the urban and rural environment. Knowledge of the culture and dynamics of Aboriginal culture.

## CHAPTER THREE

### COMPASSIONATE OFFERINGS: THE ORAL TRADITION

A live world view is founded upon the ancient tradition of transmitting the philosophical framework through story. The art of telling stories is the one way that Elder, Janet McCloud passes on her knowledge. This story offers ancient wisdom and presents a clear example of the interconnected way of living and being with one another-human, animal and plant life:

“One legend that I like is the one about the bear and eagle and how they become the leaders. They say that at one time in our distant past, our ancestors were killing animals just for the pleasure of killing. Not for food or survival, but just for fun. They were threatening whole species with extinction, so the Creator gave every living being the power to react against injustices. He also gave them a way to connect with Creator if the injustices were so overwhelming that their own power couldn’t handle it. He gave them the way to do this in their original instructions.

So the animal people put all their power together and formed a circle to petition the Creator to give them relief against the false leaders with lies, like the fox and the coyote--the tricksters. These animals would trick the others, then gobble them up and eat them. So after a while the Bear said, “I’ll be the guardian. I’ll find the site for the circle and protect everyone against anyone creating any type of disturbance. So all paths leading to the site would be protected by the bears.” And Eagle said, “I’ll watch from afar and warn you bears of anyone creating a disturbance.”

So finally, all of the animals and bird people were able to come together. They put their minds together as one and prayed to the Creator for relief from the human beings. The Creator had pity on them and helped them. And that’s where all the sicknesses come from that the human beings have. As a result, the numbers of human beings began to drop by the millions in this land. The plant world got alarmed, and they thought, if the two-legged all die, it will create a vacuum that will suck all of life with them. And so they decided to provide an antidote for every sickness the animals would give. Today, those human beings who pray, mediate, fast, and are at peace with nature can go out and a plant will manifest itself and say, Take me I’m the one

you need. That's how the people learned of all the medicines in the days long ago, and it still works today." (Johnson 1994 62-63).

This is one story of many, many stories that communicate the nature of relationships between all beings in the world, be it, human, animal or plant life. This story provides a framework for the interdependent nature of all relations needed for survival. All are considered equal, necessary with specific purposes in life.

The inevitability of change does not mean that the culture or people cannot retain their intangible values. Those values that are deeply imbedded in ancient cultural traditions as stated by Richardson in this quotation:

"People are able to change and alter the things they actually do--for example, use a gun instead of a bow and arrow--and still maintain the same view of the world. The Cree people have done this, modified their behavior, adopted new things, accepted changes of their own free will, and had maintained "the coherence and integrity of their beliefs and understandings." They were one of the few groups in North America who have been able to do this" (Richardson 1991 249).

When taking into consideration the many changes that have occurred over time, it is important to recognize that values run deep and are intangible. Those values are deeply imbedded even though there have been physical changes.

In light of this acknowledgment of change, I have outlined three possible options that could work within these parameters for Aboriginal women, culture and society.

First is to go back to the traditional ways fully. Second is to integrate the best of both worlds, and third to become totally immersed into Western culture. I will examine these three possibilities in more depth.

My initial observation or reference to the first option is that it would be very difficult

to become fully immersed back into the traditional ways because of the physical changes. The physical setting is a very different place since European contact. However, considering the spiritual aspect, which is the very foundation of the Native way of life, broadens the perspective immeasurably. Spirit does not have the same boundaries, therefore the playing field changes dramatically. This spiritual element allows one to rise above their physical limitations. When this occurs one is able to transcend themselves, their knowledge (mental) and the way that they feel (emotional) about life or any area of life. Going beyond the physical limitations is a way of raising the level of consciousness and gives rise to the second option.

The second option of integrating the old and the new is what I see currently happening for Aboriginal women. The fact that many women are bilingual is part of this process. This adds to the knowledge base for those who have retained their languages. The compromise others have had to endure is the loss of language. In a perfect world, this loss of language would have been an option rather than the imposition that it proved itself to be. History tells the story of Native language loss, and the grief it has caused, and continues to cause. Reconnecting that one facet, the language of the culture, will strengthen those women who seek to know themselves and their history. They may become reconnected in many other ways, for example through a marital alliance, a University classroom, or meeting their ancestors sometime in their adulthood. These possible scenarios speak to the multitude of situations that one may find themselves in the present day society. In this reconnecting, it is often the children who raise questions and want answers to their beginnings, and eventually ask their parents to help them approach the issue of identity during their childhood stages.

Often this cyclical nature is the impetus for Native people coming full circle, to the roots of Aboriginal culture even though at the time, they may be fully immersed into Western society.

The third option of total immersion in Western culture is also a viable option for Aboriginal women who indeed choose this route. It has been my experience that a spiritual connection or perhaps, simple curiosity beckons individuals back to their roots at some point in their lives. Seeking this knowledge can be an extremely empowering or a very disillusioning experience, and is very much dependent on how the Native perspective is introduced, presented or sought out with respect to the writing of history.

The previously introduced assumptions listed in chapter two stem from a non-aboriginal perceptions are imposed through oppressive colonial methods. These methods have included outlawing certain practices and rituals of Aboriginal nations. However, those practices and rituals continued underground. Story telling played a key role in preserving these traditions. As stories continue to be carried onward, they continue to grow in scope and encompass, not only the old but also current events in the making of history.

The language and participation barriers that were imposed caused a lot of people to be denied the direct lived experience of spirituality which was readily available to all who participated in the practices. Today the re-emergence of these crucial rituals and ceremonies such as, the Thirsting Dance, the Fasting and other lodges are being carried forward. These practices continue the connection for women with their intangible values, along with the transference of knowledge. Language is a very important element in this transmission of knowledge and, is done primarily through the care-givers. In most cases that primary care-giver is the mother. Therefore, it is important to recognize the important role and the

contributions of the women to their respective nations and society. There is an important lesson to be learned from Aboriginal culture in terms of women and their contributions in society. In their exclusion, half of a people are excluded taking with them their knowledge..

### **3.1 Language and Stories**

The writings of Freda Ahenakew offers knowledge about Aboriginal women from the perspective of Aboriginal women. The most important element of this writing pertains to spirituality, and how profoundly that affects their lives and essentially their world view. Spirituality is the essence of life and this is seen in a practical manner in the lives of Aboriginal women:

“Here, for the first time, we have autobiographical narratives which deal with daily life of Cree women...concerned with childbirth, infant care and the raising and education for children in a society where practical and spiritual matters rarely seem far apart.” (Ahenakew 1992 18).

Insight into this aspect helps to build an accurate picture of the world view from the Aboriginal themselves. The numerous personal accounts and stories told are interesting, comical and highly insightful. In another book by Ahenakew, the linguistic information also adds to this view. From this, we are able to understand how that world view affects contemporary life of Aboriginal women, families and communities. Ahenakew descriptively illustrates the structure of one of the most vibrant languages spoken in Canada today. This book helps to create an understanding and appreciation for that language and the speakers of Cree. Ahenakew examines the Cree language in great detail and offers those learnings, and substantial cultural knowledge of the language for use in the academic profession. Her

insight into the nature of the language and how that defines and translates to the world view is very crucial to creating those connections and, we become more aware of the complex nature of the current issues facing both Aboriginal and other cultures in society today.

### **3.2 Ancient Knowledge**

The Elders perspective is so important for the maintaining and transmission of the ancient knowledge and tradition. Their evolving role in Native culture is seen as a celebrated one. With life experience comes the wisdom that they will contribute to their society.

Elder Rose Auger was interviewed in recognition of the ancient knowledge of the oral tradition. She provides insight into the Aboriginal world view similarly egalitarian. The interconnected way of being in the world. Auger is also in a book written by, Sandy Johnson. This text offers the life stories of Great American Indians of North America. The methods used to portray their stories is done through their own dialogue in their own language then translated into English. The oral tradition can be found in their stories which ranges from storytelling to reiterating prophecies. The spiritual dimension has evolved as well, and exists today in the psyche of its bearers. These elders are visionaries and offer foundations for the Native world view as Elder Rose Auger explains:

*Life is a ceremony.* The Cree teachings are very strong about this. So that when you wake up in the morning, that's a ceremony of life, coming out of the dream-world. When you go into sleep, you're in the dream-world, and you're in a different state of being. Waking up is the ceremony. We believe in the birds, who follow their instructions. There's a time in the morning when you don't hear them chirping and our belief is the birds are silent because it's our turn to pray. And if you listen, you can hear that, too. When the birds are silent it is our time to pray. That's because everything is connected; everything is related" (Johnson 1994 134).

As with nature, human beings also must be responsible in their actions in the world. The stories she tells are according to the ancient tradition, to learn the meaning, you must listen carefully and learn to interpret the messages.

The book by Carl Ray and James Stevens (1971) offers ancient legends and stories of the Cree peoples. Stories are the basic foundation of the oral tradition. In the stories are the values and beliefs of the Cree peoples. The strong role women is evident in these ancient stories.

This includes historical accounts of the Cree leader, Poundmaker and the unfair treatment in the western plains of Canada. Poundmaker lived his life according to Cree tradition and was eventually imprisoned for his traditional actions and leadership. This provides insight into the clash of cultures in the late 1800's. The treatment of Native peoples in Canadian history is important for understanding of the current circumstances of Native people. We can learn from the past atrocities and make the necessary changes that have created those circumstances of the past. We grieve over the inhumane treatment of past and are in the process of creating change. Know your history and learn from it. In that history there are also many wonderful gifts that can be of use in formulating a solution. That solution will include spirituality for Native people and the following text offers valuable information.

Jennifer S. H. Brown and Robert Brightman (1988) provide written accounts of the Oral Tradition with specific accounts of rituals and practices in 1823 of the Cree and Northern Ojibwa. An attempt was made to use a comparative context toward the differences of the two cultures. Numerous stories of the Aboriginal peoples in relation to the spiritual connectedness of this culture in all areas such as hunting, medicinal herbal usage to give an



idea of the different world views of European and Aboriginal cultures through their stories. In the colonization process, a complex relationship occurred between those who controlled and those who were controlled. The next book offers a frame of reference into those relations. Understanding those relations is imperative to the solution.

Numerous Elders from Alberta offered their stories to author, Dianne Meili (1991), of the area over the span of their lives in the last one hundred years. They provide insight into the changes they have undergone in area of colonization such as the residential experience, hunting and gathering, as well as providing some possible solutions. Some of the tribes include the Cree, Blackfoot, Beaver and Stoney. The Elder's accounts were helpful in determining cultural changes that have occurred for Native people in the areas pertaining to early family systems and changes therein.

### **3.3 Understanding Changes**

Paulo Freire (1970) provides insight into the political structure of the relationship between the oppressor and oppressed and offers a possible solution. He suggests that examining colonization and methods imposed through that structure will create understanding the dynamics of this relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. The different ways that their respective worlds are viewed is important to this process. The solution offered by Freire is in taking responsibility for those roles and in that way it will effect changes in the relationship.

Author Pat Defter-MacArthur (1993), outlines and identifies her view of the experience of Aboriginal peoples within the last five generations. She identifies those five

generations as, 1.) The treaty signers, 2.) Legal Government Oppression, 3.) Legal Government Oppression and Education, 4.) Indian Rebirth, and 5. Choices-Assimilation, Integration or Separation (Pp. 6-8). She offers important insight into the systemic discrimination for Native people in Canada. Knowledge of this information is important in the formation of solutions.

Michael Hart (1990) offers new insight into education and the ways of learning derived from the ancient knowledge and traditions. The information offers uses of ancient traditions in contemporary education. This is important to the educational process of the future for Native peoples. Making use of those ancient practices will aid in the overall health and healing process. This contribution is appreciated and comes from the Aboriginal perspective toward unraveling the threads of colonization.

Patricia Monture-Angus (1995) is highly insightful in the area of the legal systemic discrimination and exclusion of Aboriginal peoples in Canadian society. Her personal experience shed light onto areas relating to issues of Aboriginal women and the law. Laws that have dehumanized in the past and are being perpetuated today. Most notably are her suggestions for solutions that include women and traditions:

“Women’s involvement in justice work is not just a measure or standard of success of justice initiatives, the Aboriginal women’s role is much more central and essential. There is one message I have heard so many times in trying to figure out what justice is. I have heard the old people say, “It was grandmother who made the laws, it was grandfather who enforced them.” So when you talk among our political leaders about the administration of justice or constitutional rights for self government you are not talking to the right people because you are not talking to the women. It was the women who had a fundamental role in making laws in our communities. I cannot stress enough that the answer lies with the women *of the communities*” (1995 262-263).

She is forthright with strong convictions for writing about the strengths of the ancient knowledge that can be of use today. She recognizes that current issues are different today than in the past and a creative solution is needed for those new complexities. Her confidence and belief in the traditions is most admirable and correct, and correlates with my experience with the elders and their recounts.

Richardson Boyce (1991) examines the Northern Cree experience with regards to the land issue and cultural changes. In his examination he provides numerous stories told by the Cree peoples which is relevant to the value system and its people. He also examines the inequities they have undergone in the area of land settlements and agreements.

Robert A. Trennert (1975) substantiates the intended genocide of Aboriginal peoples using residential schools. It was formulated in the United States and brought into Canada. Aboriginal women as transmitters of the culture were targeted for that purpose. Trennert states that this attempt of genocide was unsuccessful and may have added confusion. These accounts are important in the understanding of the process involved in cultural genocide attempt.

The above sources were important in creating a climate filled with understanding the environment in which Aboriginal people find themselves. These storytellers and conveyers of knowledge add volumes to the foundation in furthering that understanding with compassion and profound insight.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### VENERATION OF THE SOUL: VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

The knowing of the interconnected realities is essential to the understanding of a world view that is whole. On the physical level life is constantly changing. This is evident in our physical bodies and environment such as, the seasons of life cycles of all beings. However, there are the two other dimensions to consider. The mental and spiritual must be included in any analysis, if any deep and meaningful understanding is to be achieved. The mental level is another part of the “whole” that is imposed, sought and channeled through informal and formal methods throughout life. Aboriginal peoples have experienced residential schooling, day schooling and today continue to seek out further learning in educational institutions in their life processing along with carrying on their oral tradition. Spirituality plays a significant role in Aboriginal life. It is what connects all other dimensions in an interconnected reality.

A clear example presented itself in the interviews I conducted with interviewee (H). Prior to giving an answer the interviewee she motioned with her right hand to her upper right side and stated, “excuse me for talking about you”. She then proceeded to explain her point about a specific incident which involved her late husband. The interviewee acknowledged and paid respect to her late husband who is in the spiritual realm beyond this reality. This type of acknowledgment still exists in the world view of aboriginal peoples today.

Upon analyzing the data within the aboriginal perspective I took into account the distinct cultural differences within Nations. In retrospect, it may have been wiser to work within one collective nation rather than two or more. There are emerging themes that are identified and will be given in- depth consideration in this research. Those themes are as follows, 1) Identity, 2) Language, 3) Family, Education, 4) Family and, 5) Oral History and Traditions.

It is important to note that the transference of oral tradition to the written tradition creates a difficult environment on many levels. This information is offered in light of the changes and modes of communication necessary for understanding of universality among peoples. This is an area that I personally struggled with, and asked many people their thoughts on the topic. That is, where are the lines drawn for First Nation's peoples ethnic boundaries. In crossing those lines, what is to gained or lost?

I received many answers from many different people who stated that there are specific areas that should not be written about. Those areas specifically pertained to the acts of rituals and practices that should remain oral. On the basis of this input, I have omitted writing traditional names and the knowledge of the practices therein. I have been fortunate enough to work with people of the old and the new knowledge. In no way do I mean any disrespect to them or any being involved. I am especially grateful to the eight women who agreed to take part in my study. They continue to carry one the many roles of Aboriginal women, they are the warriors, teachers, healers of our day.

#### **4.1 Self-Identity**

Identity is at the heart of this research and is critical in how these women live their

lives. All of the Aboriginal women that were interviewed had knowledge of their Aboriginal background to varying degrees. This range of experiences varied and affected all aspects of their lives. For example, those who readily identified with their respective cultural group lived within a closer proximity of their cultural group. This also affected their choice of prospective mates, marital status and ultimately their socioeconomic status.

Along with those factors the degree of adaptation or acculturation to Western culture also varied to suit their chosen environment. For example, those individuals who remained within their reserve boundaries in the urban setting would be exposed to the cultural milieu of that particular environment. The reservation boundaries provide access to the Native language and ethnic boundaries therein.

Other examples of environmental influences and lifestyle could include the urban setting. The urban setting affords individuals with better accessibility to educational and health facilities. Employment opportunities improve providing the individuals are qualified to meet the employment standards.

The individuals that retained their language had the ability to communicate across generations and this was dependent again on the chosen environment. Native language use allowed individuals access to and the support of the older generation.

Discrimination played a role in all environments and was dependent upon the individual's self esteem and skills they were able to use in the different environments. In the reserve or rural setting, those with stronger Native cultural skills were more readily accepted and more able to adapt. Those same individuals might have experienced more difficulty in the urban setting. And this also is dependent upon the formal and informal education of the

individual.

All participants were involved in their cultural ways at some point in their lives and most have desire to learn more of their traditional ways. This profoundly affects the issue of identity. Included in the area of identity is the concept of naming, in both contemporary and Native tradition.

**Table 1 Names**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Given Names:	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Traditional Names Attained:			X		X	X	X	X
Traditional Names Not Attained :	X	X		X				

Generally speaking, all participants were affected by either their Native language use or through the language loss. Those participants (C, E, F, G, and H) who have attained their traditional names (See table 1) would have had to participated in cultural practices to receive their traditional names. Interviewees (C, D, G and H) were fluent in their respective languages and were able to relate to, and were able to see the relevance of the oral tradition in their everyday lives. Others, (B, E, and F) expressed working toward more actively participating in their culture.

All participants with the exception of (A) are pursuing further traditional learnings which they felt was of value to them in enhancing their lives. This is being done, as expressed, through herbal medicinal learning or elements of spirituality in varying degrees. It is possible to learn the two mentioned skills in isolation but, it ideally they should be learned

together. The two older participants (C, and H) strongly seek out this type of knowledge and fully recognize the importance and significance it can have in their lives. They expressed the improvement in their lives with the continuous, further learning and participation of their Native traditions.

#### **4.2 Languages Spoken**

**Table 2. Languages**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
English	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cree			X	X				
Blackfoot							X	X

The connection can be made that language (See table 2) and practices are intertwined. Those fluent Native language speakers (C, D, G and H) appeared to have a greater interest and, role in the practices of their culture. Those who were not Native speakers expressed an interest in becoming speakers. The ability to speak a Native language would award a Native speaker more specific roles in the practices. They would also be able to communicate across age, social and cultural boundaries. This was true for (H) who worked in her community and was far better able to communicate to those who also were native speakers of their language. The one exception was (A) who stated that she got a long this far without it fairly well and that it might be too difficult to attain at this stage of her life. There was a definite uneasiness with this topic for those participants (B, E, and F) who did not attain their native language.



I felt that it needed to be treated with extra sensitivity.

Linguistically speaking, the Cree language gender is identified as animate/inanimate whereas some European language gender are identified as masculine/feminine/neutral (Ahenakew 1987 15). When this distinction is made, it becomes easy to understand how the world view might be understood in different terms.

### **4.3 Family Background**

**Table 3 Family Background**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Paternal Parent:	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Maternal Parent:	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Paternal G-parent:	X		X	X	X			
Maternal G-parent:								
Paternal Beyond:			X	X				
Maternal Beyond:								

This section refers to the family context for the interviewees. The knowledge or loss of knowledge of their genealogical origins and some possible reasons for their positioning in the family context. All interviewees (A-H) were aware of their maternal and paternal parentage. Interviewees, (A, C, D, and E) were knowledgeable of their paternal grandparent, but did not know about their maternal grandparent. Whereas, (B, F, G, and H) appeared to

be unaware of their maternal grandparent.

Some possible reasons for this might be related marital relations or possibly actions stemming from the Indian Act. Women's lives changed somewhat if they married into other Nations and, also if they married Non-Native men. They either moved away from their family of origin or could no longer reside on their homelands due to the Indian Act. If the case was that they became disenfranchised, they would have been required to move from their home reserves. This would mean that the women had Native status prior to any such marriage occurred.

The results show that many of these interviewees had little knowledge of their ancestry. It could also be that the interviewees have been affected by the Indian Act and the changes therein themselves. That loss of ancestry knowledge could be conveyed part and parcel of the cultural genocidal process that occurred for Aboriginal people in Canada. This loss directly relates to the sense of identity and well being of these women. Interviewees (B and C) knew of their ancestry beyond the fourth generation. The most knowledgeable interviewee was (C) who could go back seven generations on her paternal lineage. Both (C, and D) were of Cree ancestry and fluent Cree speakers. The cultural strength of the oral tradition of their Cree culture could be a factor in their retaining and transference of their knowledge. These individuals would be better able to relate to their ancestors through the use of the Native language. Although interviewees, (G, and H) were also fluent in their Native language, they were reluctant to impart or knew little of their lineage beyond their parentage.

All participants (A-H) expressed maintaining strong connections with their maternal

parent which relates to their living according to the matrilineal laws within their respective Nations. This became evident in their relaying of information of the nature of their relationship with their maternal parent. Their mother continues to be supportive either in their co-existing living arrangements or in the child rearing assistance.

#### **4.4 Educational Experiences**

**Table 4. Formal Education**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Grade 0-9			X					
Grade 10-12		X			X	X		
College	X			X				X
University							X	

This formal education chart (See table 4) is used to illustrate the level of education for the participants. Formal education is a complex issue when examining Aboriginal people simply because as Mondure-Angus states:

“The stark reality, however, for Aboriginal peoples is that our education has not been about access to opportunities but rather forced assimilation to a different and foreign cultural world view” (1995 91).

This issue must be given consideration as it has profound affects on the person who is involved in such an experience. Assimilation definitely plays a role in education. As an educator, I find little evidence to suggest that educators do not transmit values in the classroom. Values are not something you can set aside when you perform your duties or

anything else for that matter. As with the other emerging themes, I found that language was important to education, whether it was English or a Native Language or both simultaneously. Four participants were bilingual speakers. This affected their education achievements, self esteem and the furthering of their formal education level in presumably many different ways. The formal education (See table 4) attained by the participants ranged from grade nine to the University level. From their answers on how successful they felt with their achievements, I was able to discern that, three of the participants (A, C, and H) seemed confident and satisfied with their educational achievements, five (B, D, E, F, and G) others were contemplating or currently enrolled in educational institutions in efforts to further their formal education.

Four of the participants (A, B, E, and F) alluded to or identified English as their primary language. The four other participants (C, D, G, and H) were bilingual in English and their Native tongue. Following are comments on the correlation between a second language acquisition and learning for the four bilingual speakers (C, D, G, and H.). Both (C, and H) were fluent and expressed their confidence in their bilingual ability in both their Native language and English. The other two (D, G) felt that they wanted further learning of the English language and both were in the process of attending formal educational institutions. Age may have been a factor in this difference. Both (C, and H) were in the fifty plus age range. Their first language was spoken in the home by primary care-givers and siblings and they would have had more years of experience with a possibility of more varied types of experiences in the work force over the younger participants (D, and G). Both (D, and G) seemed to lack confidence in their English skills. This could possibly be related to less experience overall. Their age range was approximately 31 to 40 years of age.

#### **4.5 Oral History and Traditions**

**Table 5. Oral History and Traditions (Practices/Rituals):**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Observational:	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Active Participant:		X	X	X	X	X	X	X

This area is central to cultural collectivity (see table 5), a sense of belonging and Identity. It greatly affected the interviewee's level of self esteem and social ties to their cultural group. All participants (A-H) claimed to be observers of their culture to varying degrees. Interviewee, (A) had knowledge and had observed but declined to be an active participant, stating that spirituality was for everyone and that it was not necessary to be an active participant to any collective group. Her point of spirituality as a universal value is valid. All cultures must have their own sense of a spirituality. Some possible answers for participating in the Native cultural practices may be due to the loss of her Native language, or that she may have had negative preconceptions or experiences associated with Native practices relating to alternative religious beliefs. It is also possible that she may align herself more closely with her Non-Native ties. Interviewees, (B-H) claimed to be active participants with cultural practices. Some examples of the practices mentioned were, the sweat lodge, the specific naming ceremony and other rituals. Those participants (C, E, F, G, and H) who have received their traditional name would have had more cultural involvement (see table 5) simply because they have a traditional name involves a ritual in attaining one.

**Table 6. Role Models**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Immediate Family (maternal)	X		X		X		X	
Immediate Family (paternal)		X	X	X				
Extended Family (maternal)								X
Extended Family (paternal)		X						
Friend (not a relative)	X			X	X	X		
Professional Ally (ie: Counsellor, Elder)						X	X	X

The range provided for the interviewee's to choose from was created by the interviewee's. Those choices were classified in the categories so that one may see a possible pattern emerging. The range of role models (see table 6) included immediate family to unrelated professionals.

Of the sixteen choices by the eight interviewee's (A-H), twelve female role models were chosen by (A, E, F, G, and H), within the range of immediate family to unrelated professionals.

Furthermore, four of the interviewees (A, C, E, and G) identified their mothers as one of their role models. Twenty-five percent in which the interviewee's saw their mothers as important in their lives and role formation in life. Interviewees (B, C, and D) identified their fathers as their role model, which is slightly less than the twenty-five percent reported for mothers. Interviewee (B) also identified her paternal grandmother as her second role model for her kindness quality. Interviewee's (A, D, E, and F) identified unrelated friends as one other role model in their lives. This could relate to the camaraderie and support lent to the

interviewees in those friendships. Interviewee (H) chose her maternal extended family as her role model for the professionalism, and personal strength displayed in difficult times. This chosen role model appeared to be her (H) mentor. Finally, (F, G, and H) identified a professional ally as a role model. That professional ally was identified as being adept in their work or relayed important learnings and mentorship, such as knowledge given by an elder. This was again slightly less than twenty-five percent similar to the father's role. This might translate to the masculine quality of gaining important direction or information that could help further the interviewee's along in their lives.

The large number of female role models could translate to the kinship system of the matriarchy, showing that the camaraderie and mentoring is of importance to the support network of these women. Their similarities allow them to relate well with one another in a fashion of a camaraderie.

Both the personal and professional development was important in regard to the mentorship that each sought out in their relations with their professional allies. Three interviewees (F, G, and H) identified their professional ally as their Elder. This is important to the cultural cohesiveness and further development in the cultural realm. These three possibly identified with the Elder as their role model for reasons of cultural cohesion, and for development of self identity.

I included a section on age (see table 7) after considering the formal and informal educational experiences that affected language or lack of language transmission. Clearly, age is related to the kind of informal and formal educational experiences the participants have undergone. Those with their Native language retention and fluency tended to be older in age

(C, D, G, H). Their age range here is thirty-four to fifty plus. Language retention and fluency appear to be related to their informal educational experience of their childhood rearing practices in this age group. For example, their primary care-givers or parents were probably fluent Native language speakers. Three of the participants (B, E, F) had some Native language exposure but were not fluent speakers. Their age ranged from twenty to thirty-two years of age. One (A) did not speak her Native language.

**Table 7 Age**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
0-20 YEARS					X		?	
21-30 YEARS	X					X		
31-40 YEARS		X		X				
41-50 YEARS								
50 PLUS YEARS			X					X

The language retention and fluency for this group were related to the primary caregivers who gave their offspring less exposure to a Native language due to the possible influence of different ethnic groupings within the family makeup. For example, it is possible that one or neither parent spoke a Native language in the home during their childhood upbringing. The other possibility could be that English was their primary language during child rearing. However, it is important to note that this group clearly recognized and expressed an interest in becoming knowledgeable of their Native language. They also



indicated that there was a correlation between their Native Language to culture. Participant (A), aged twenty-eight did not speak her Native language, and felt that it was too difficult to learn at this stage in her life, but also expressed that it might be important for her children to learn the Native language.

Another possible influencing factor that could affect their views and life experience, self esteem with reference to how they may feel about those life experiences. Other could be in their home locale, mobility, employment, marital alliances and offspring which could affect the stability of individuals and their families. Age is considered to be of importance within the Aboriginal culture for a number of reasons. The experience gained over many years, the growing role as child, young woman, wife, mother, grandmother and as an elder. This aspect was especially noticeable in the confidence of the older women. They appeared more relaxed and accepting of responsibility in their growing role.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMON SOUTHERN SAGES - CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Discussion of the Research Questions**

The frame of reference or value system of aboriginal culture is very much part of the oral history tradition. Aboriginal women are connecting and reconnecting with their frame of reference as beginning and active participants of that oral tradition. That means that they are part of, or re-integrated back into their families, communities or cultures as a whole. In keeping with that, they continue the ancient practices of the oral history. That part-taking involves telling the stories that relate to ancient and current historical practices and the evolving of self and of identity within the aboriginal definition and understanding by aboriginal women.

Aboriginal culture and traditions are in constant change, as is the life force. Women are part of that life change. My findings with regards to identifying the traditional aboriginal background is such that the strands remain with the women as part of their value system. They are able to share, as in the sharing of their life stories. With respect to the land, they are among the lowest on the socioeconomic scales but remain in high numbers the breadwinners for their families, as well as healers and leaders in their communities.

Upon consideration of the historical atrocities that aboriginal peoples have experienced throughout history in North America, specifically in Canada, the level of self esteem for Aboriginal women has for a period of time been in a vulnerable state. The oppressive methods of the residential schooling, the permit system on reserve, Bill C-31 and

so on, have definitely had a negative affect upon women. However, the fact that these eight women for the most part actively participate in traditional practices with or without their aboriginal languages indicate that they have a positive view of their culture, thus themselves.

The strongest learning that I derived from this research is that the aboriginal way of life is based in the oral tradition and that tradition is vibrant and life affirming. It should remain the telling of life and live stories and nothing else. If it does make the shift into the written tradition, it ceases to exist in its natural and most ancient form. Women continue to tell their stories and carry on the ancient oral tradition. It is what best nourishes the soul!

## **5.2 Summoning Southern Sages: Final Commentary**

Processing and completing this study was highly insightful and challenging as researcher, observer and participant. My interest in the topic is highly personal because I am an Aboriginal woman of the Cree nation. I was able to wear all hats simultaneously and in the process, felt dehumanized and elated at different intervals with the findings. I have become more interested in this area as a result, recognize that there is so much more to learn about history. This learning would allow me insight into the knowledge base of my ancestors and the life of the present day. If anything, this study has allowed me to develop and use my critical thinking skills and formulate my ideas in a more culturally relevant way. The inequality placed upon Aboriginal women in the past is evident. Though I and others may feel the pain and misfortune of the past, we also can look forward to seeking out the elements of that past that are of importance toward an optimistic view for the future. The many gifts bestowed upon Aboriginal peoples, through culture that can be drawn upon in future. This is a wonderful opportunity for Aboriginal women to become knowledgeable in choosing

future paths that are brighter with the knowledge of the past. Use of their strengths, once identified, can be applied in order that they may live their lives more meaningfully.

This is a crucial time for the Aboriginal women to take leadership and rebuild or recreate facets of cultural past by integrating traditional wisdom and present potential from this context into a new way of life. This requires wisdom, sensitivity, strength, and a nurturing instinct that is naturally the way for women.

Parts of this study process works in opposition with the nature of native culture in some respects, therefore I found it very difficult to present an accurate portrayal of my views which are within the native perspective. For example, all the Aboriginal women interviewed in my opinion follow their culture closely, consciously and/or unconsciously, in their decision-making process, direction, goals, and lives. Those women who were experiencing difficulties such as, socioeconomic , lacking in formal education and living according to non-aboriginal standards, retain and use their informal learnings in the form of Native language and traditions within their communities and in their lives. Those employed professionals who have an ability to operate within native and non-native worlds with relative ease retained their Native language and identified that as an internal part of their identity. Also, those who have retained their language are able to connect across generations and cultures. Generally they are more immersed in their cultural group and have more knowledge of their ancestry and thus their history, language and traditions.

It is easy to see how negative results are found when measuring success through a non-native hierarchical perspective, however, I found that matriarchy is still evident in, Family Context, immediate/extended family support systems using an Aboriginal perspective.

This is one of the strands that are important to women and traditions. The definition of Aboriginal and the Non-Aboriginal context seemed irrelevant because values go with along the person whatever the culture. Their ideals remained relatively stable however they conditions and actions, as is, in live at times, unstable.

The knowing of both the old, the new, and the intertwining of the two over time is very humbling indeed. As previously stated, it is no longer permissible to play into the part of being victim, being persecuted, or worse, being romanticized as the noble savage. In order to reach that high level of consciousness we must also dismiss the Indian Agent of his duties and instead, reconnect with our ancestors and that wondrous knowledge that can bring about the changes required to live happier, healthier lives. In times of need, knowing who to call upon brings about this change for the better. Learn about Big Bear, Geronimo, and others who gave the warrior cry, the conjurers, conjuring in the rhythmic beats of the heart and in the wind of change. The universal law of sharing is freely given to all peoples of all nations and knows no boundaries. The degree and mediums to which people share vary, but remain universal. In this way, the stories and the tellers continue to carry strengths and gifts of the ancient knowledge, of knowing and sharing for generations to come as is the tradition throughout our ancient history.

## EPILOGUE

“All living creatures and all plants derive their life from the sun. If it were not for the sun, there would be darkness and nothing could grow -- the earth would be without life. If the sun alone were to act upon the plants and animals, the heat would be so great that they would die, but there are clouds that bring rain, and the actions of the sun and earth together supply the moisture that is needed for life. . . . This is according to the laws of nature” (Stone, Curtis, Sharpe 1993 38).

OKUTE, Teton Sioux

## REFERENCES

- Ahenakew, F. and Wolfart, H. C. (1992). Kohkominawakotachinmoiniwawa: Our grandmothers' lives as told in their words. Saskatoon: Fifth House Press
- Ahenakew, F. (1987). Cree language structures: A Cree approach. Pemmican, Winnipeg: Winnipeg Publications.
- Auger, L. 1995. "Breaths of History". Calgary.
- Barnett, D. C. (1976). Poundmaker. Don Mills, Ontario: Fitzhenry, Whiteside.
- Brown, J. S. H. and Brightman, R. (1988). The orders of the dreamed: George Nelson on Cree and northern Ojibwa religion and myth, 1823. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.
- Francis, R. D., Jones, R., Smith, D. B. (1992). Destinies: Canadian history since confederation. Toronto: Holt, Reinhart and Winston of Canada.
- Freire, P. (1970). Pedagogy of the oppressed. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company.
- Frideres, J. S. (1998). Native peoples in Canada: Contemporary conflicts. Scarborough. Prentice Hall Canada Ltd.
- Hart, M. A. (1996). Sharing circles: Utilizing traditional practice methods for teaching, helping, and supporting. From our eyes: Learning from indigenous peoples. Eds. S. M'Meara and D. A. West. Toronto: Garamont Press.
- Johnson, Sandy. (1987). The book of elders: The life stories & wisdom of great American Indians. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Karpinski, E. C. and Lea, I. (1993). Pens of many colours: A Canadian reader. Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Company Canada Ltd.
- Little Bear, L. (1982). The concept of native title: Native people and justice in Canada. The Canadian Legal Aid Bulletin, 5 (2 & 3), 101-102. Ottawa.
- Meili, D. (1991). Those who know: Profiles of Alberta's native elders. Edmonton: NeWest Publishers, Inc.

Monture-Angus, P. (1995). Thunder in my soul: A Mohawk woman speaks. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Okute, Teton Sioux. (1993). Untitled prose. In J. Stone (Ed.) Every part of this earth is sacred: Native American voices in praise of nature. San Francisco, CA.: Harper.

Ray, C. and Stevens, J (1971). Sacred legends of the Sandy Lake Cree. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited.

Richardson, B. (1991). Strangers devour the land. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd.

Trennert, R. A. (1990). Educating Indian girls at non-reservation boarding schools, 1870-1820, in Dubois, Ellen Carol and Vicki Ruiz, (Eds.) Unequal Sisters. New York: Routledge.

Weatherford, Jack. 1988. Indian givers: How the Indians of the Americas transformed the world. New York: Fawcett Columbine.



**APPENDIX I**  
**BREATHS OF HISTORY QUESTIONNAIRE**

## SELF-IDENTITY

### Individual(s) definition of success:

- a. What is your idea of living a good life?
- b. What has been helpful to you that enabled you to live your life fully?

### Role Models

- a. Tell me about two people that you thought highly of and why?
- b. How have those people affected your life?

### Historical Identity

- a. Describe your historical/Ancestral origins?
- b. Explain the areas you consider yourself knowledgeable about of your Aboriginal history?

### Educational Identity

- a. Do you consider Aboriginal traditions a credible or valuable form of education?
- b. How is this traditional Aboriginal knowledge used in your life today?
- c. Would you like further learnings in Aboriginal traditions? Explain.
- d. What level of formal education have you attained?
- e. Do you feel satisfied in accomplishing that level of education?
- f. If not, what level of education would you feel successful?

### Identity within Family Context

- a. What is the nature of your spousal relationship?
- b. Do you have children? How many?
- c. Is your immediate family your total support system?
- d. Explain how your extended family is supportive of you?

## ABORIGINAL TRADITIONS

### Language

- a. Do you speak your Aboriginal language?
- b. How has speaking your Aboriginal language affected you positively?
- c. How has speaking your Aboriginal language affected you negatively?
- d. Do you think it is necessary to know your Aboriginal language?
- e. Would you like to learn English better?

### Oral Traditional Learnings

- a. Have you received a traditional name? Tell me about it?
- b. Have you participated in traditional ceremonies? Name them.
- c. Tell me how your participation in traditional ceremonies affects your life?



**APPENDIX II****RESOUNDING INTRINSIC CHANTS: INTERVIEW DATA**

**Questionnaire**  
**February 12, 1996**  
**Interview with A.**

**I SELF-IDENTITY**

**Individual(s) definition of success:**

Q: What is your idea of living a good life?

A: If you're very happy inside you'll have a good life.

Q: What has been (would be) helpful to you that (to) enabled you to live your life fully?

A: Yeah. Ah, self awareness stuff. Like? Like ah believing that you're responsible for your life and the problems that you have you can solve, taking responsibility for yourself about how you feel.

**Role Models:**

Q: Tell me about two people that you thought highly of and why?

A: That I use to think highly of?

Q: Tell me about tow people that you think or thought highly of and why?

A: Ah my friend R because she is just a very accepting person, she's very nice, very nice and my mom because she's a very accepting person too.

Q: How have those people affected your life?

A: Well my mom affected my life because she raised me and L affects my life because I like her because she's a good friend to talk to.

**II FACTORS**

**Historical Identity:**

Q: Describe your historical/Ancestral origins?

A: My historical origins. My dad is Hungarian from Hungry and he's only Hungarian. (It would be interesting to know if he has any gypsy background. They have their own brand of spirituality). My mom is Cree and mixed with Scottish or Irish or different nationalities.

Q: Explain the areas you consider yourself knowledgeable about of your Aboriginal history?

A: (Ha!) Ah, I don't know. (There's lots of tape), (There's lots of tape, ha). Is you're class gonna listen to this? No. Why do you need to tape it? You don't

have to answer it, you could just say no. Okay well ask me again. Explain the areas you consider yourself knowledgeable about your Aboriginal history? Ah, I guess I have knowledge of native spirituality just from seeing it not practising it...and...I see a lot of systemic discrimination, a lot of stereotypes, that's about it. That's a good answer.

### **Level of Education:**

- Q: Do you consider Aboriginal traditions a credible or valuable form of education?  
 A: Yes. I think it's important for all cultures to understand where they came from, what their history is because it makes up who they are as people.
- Q: How is this traditional Aboriginal knowledge used in your life today?  
 A: Ha, actually I think its given me just even though I don't practice the spirituality part the way a lot of other native people do I think it did give me my first insight into spirituality, other than Christian stuff, but I really liked, what was the question again? How is this traditional Aboriginal knowledge used in your life today? Actually, I do light smudge and sweet grass (pause) sometimes when I pray so I guess that's a way of using it. I work with native people all the time, I think some of it's just ingrained that you do when really aware of it, it's just your way of life.
- Q: Would you like further learnings in Traditional Aboriginal learning? Explain.  
 A: Well, actually, I wouldn't mind for my kids to have further learnings. I wouldn't mind if they started learning Cree and they started dancing and stuff like that but I feel like I know enough about it.
- Q: What level of formal education have you attained?  
 A: Ah, college.
- Q: Do you feel satisfied in accomplishing that level of education?  
 A: Ah, yeah, I think of going back but it's not a priority.
- Q: If not, what level of education would you feel successful?  
 A: With what I have.

### **Family Context:**

- Q: What is the nature of your spousal relationship?  
 A: Ah, on again, off again. (Do you want to pursue that and ask if she is married?)

Q: Do you have children? How many?

A: Two

Q: Is your immediate family your total support system?

A: No. (Perhaps here ask "who else" Because it may not be family at all)

Q: Explain how your extended family is supportive of you?

A: Well my mom is supportive because even though I don't talk to her that much I know that I could phone her anytime I needed help or anything like that or if I just wanted to talk to her I could phone her. Ah, my in-laws are supportive of me because I know even though I don't use them that much that I like I felt that they are there for me if I need them. Ah, my grandmother (paternal grandmother) that lives in XXXXXXXXX, I love her a lot and it's nice to know that she's there. Ah, how do I use her, them support? Mostly babysitting...talking.  
(What relationship does she have with her father?)

### III ABORIGINAL TRADITIONS

#### Language:

Q: Do you speak your Aboriginal language?

A: No I do not.

Q: How has speaking your Aboriginal language affected you positively? (n/a)

A: (NA)

Q: How has speaking your Aboriginal language affected you negatively? (n/a)

A: (NA)

Q: Do you think it is necessary to know your Aboriginal language?

A: I think it would be a really good thing to know like I don't think it's necessary cause I don't know, it's so obviously it must not be necessary. I would like to learn it but it just seem like it would be lots of work.

Q: Would you like to learn English better? (This may also not be applicable, if she is fluent, perhaps "would you like to study English further?")

A: No.

#### Oral Traditional Learnings

Q: Have you received a traditional name? Tell me about it?

A: No.

Q: Have you participated in traditional ceremonies? Name them.

A: No, sometimes not very often.

Q: Tell me how your participation in traditional ceremonies affects your life?

A: (na)

### Overall Health

Rate your overall health in each of the categories by circling one of the following:

	-									+
Physical	1	2	3	4	5	6	(7)	8	9	10
Mental	1	2	3	4	5	6	(7)	8	9	10
Emotional	1	2	3	4	5	6	(7)	8	9	10
Spiritual	1	2	3	4	5	6	(7)	8	9	10

Name: A

Age: 28

(Had some difficulty making out some of her answers she was soft spoken).



**Questionnaire**  
**March 10, 1996**  
**Interview with B.**

**I. IDENTITY**

**Individual(s) definition of success:**

Q: What is your idea of living a good life?

A: To me living a good life is ah, not being controlled by money, having money issues, ah, to live comfortably have, ah, have my own home and financially secure and you know our good family, ah, security.

Q: What has been helpful to you that enabled you to live your life fully?

A: I think mostly it has to do with my children, my life has evolved around them. I ah, yeah, I believe that.

**Role Models:**

Q: Tell me about two people that you thought highly of and why?

A: My father and my grandmother, my father was ah, very kind man, he ah, took time to explain things to me, he accepted me for who I was and he guided me he wasn't ah, dominate man he just a very ah wonderful man and his mother I would think that my dad ah took after he mother because my grandmother was a very jolly grandmother she loved her grandchildren she was just ah she was great.

Q: How have those people affected your life?

A: Ah, ah, they ah, think it would be positive my dad always had a way of ah looking at things good he always made me feel like I could really make it in my life he, he believed in me which made me believe in myself and my grandma I imagine done that you know teach him that way.

**II FACTORS**

**Historical Identity:**

Q: Describe your historical/Ancestral origins?

A: Ah my father is ah from a reserve and he was raised up there and ah I kinda I don't know because ah apparently my father didn't quite know his father so I don't know where the family tree is with that.

Q: What nation are you?

A: Cree

Q: Your mother?

A: Cree, she's ah her maiden name was A, her parents died when she was quite young.

Q: Any other blood.

A: No.

Q: Explain the areas you consider yourself knowledgeable about of your Aboriginal history?

A: Ah Oh I do know I'm Cree I know little parts like little ah you know I know a little bit of this I don't got it all gathered to know everything but yet I was saying that my mom's ah parents died when she was quite young so she was put into ah missionary so like she was more raised up french then anything and my dad he was raised up the native way and, and ah we lived in the city, I've never lived on the reserve and ah we, we actually like I knew I was native and everything but ah we lived more the ah just we've never really know that much about our heritage actually.

**Level of Education:**

Q: Do you consider Aboriginal traditions a credible or valuable form of education?

A: Oh very valuable you know gives yourself identity where you come from and your family roots.

Q: How is this traditional Aboriginal knowledge used in your life today?

A: How is it now? I think it was more so when I was in Edmonton when I took an Aboriginal course I did work for XXXXXXXXXX and ah I find more in XXXXXXXXXX because I was starting to really ah get into round dances and you know I was learning you know a lot and ah but not so much here I notice I don't but I should ah mention that ah my family and that we all want to find the answers and you know yeah.

Q: Would you like further learnings in Aboriginal traditions? Explain.

A: Oh yes definitely very spiritual.

Q: Can you explain?

A: Yes, to me its very spiritual ah just ah what was the question again? Ha ha.

Q: Would you like further learnings in Aboriginal traditions?

A: Oh yes, yeah I would like to know everything about it you know I would like to know. I want to speak the language.

Q: What level of formal education have you attained?

A: I have my eleven twelve education.

Q: Do you feel satisfied in accomplishing that level of education?

A: Nope I plan to go back to school.

Q: If not, what level of education would feel successful?

A: Ah I would feel successful with a University level that was my dream since I was a child ah I Just love school I don't know where I would ah say or like to stop I would be happy with my social work diploma right now that's what I'm aiming for.

### **Family Context:**

Q: What is the nature of your spousal relationship?

A: I ha ha ha

Q: Common-law..?

A: Yep I've been living with R for two years.

Q: Do you have children?

A: Yes

Q: How many?

A: Three

Q: Is your immediate family your total support system?

A: Yes.

Q: Explain how your extended family is supportive of you?

A: Is my extended family R's you mean, or...?

Q: Supportive of you?

A: Yeah, they're very kind to me yes. Like I'm not really close to.

Q: Like your aunts and uncles?

A: Oh my aunts and uncles oh yeah I'm close to them.

### **III ABORIGINAL TRADITIONS**

#### **Language:**

Q: Do you speak your Aboriginal language?

A: Ah a little, moya ha ha ha. A little but not much.

Q: How has speaking your Aboriginal language affected you positively?  
 A: It will when I speak it. Ha ha ha.

Q: How has speaking your Aboriginal language affected you negatively?  
 A: Oh I don't really know it but no, not at all.

Q: Do you think it is necessary to know your Aboriginal language?  
 A: Oh definitely yes.

Q: Would you like to learn English better?  
 A: Yes.

**Oral Traditional Learnings**

Q: Have you received a traditional name?  
 A: No, I would like one.

Q: Have you participated in traditional ceremonies?  
 A: I, yes.

Q: Can you name them?  
 A: I was ah in XXXXXXXX, I was on the committee for the school and we had round dances and helped in I was on the board so I helped them get that together and I've been in a sweat a few years back and ah you know where they eat.

Q: Feast?  
 A: Feast, yeah.

Q: Tell me how your participation in traditional ceremonies affects your life?  
 A: Ah to me its ah it brings me closer to the Creator just ah fell like ah oneness very spiritual, I fell like I belong somewhere.

Comments: The dreams I've had help me. I realize I had something special, it made me realize I have a purpose in life you know I don't feel so insecure with my life at all because of my dreams.

**OVERALL HEALTH**    March 10/96

Rate your overall health in each of the categories by circling one of the following:

								+		
	-									
Physical	1	2	(3)	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Mental	1	2	3	4	5	(6)	7	8	9	10
Emotional	1	2	3	4	5	(6)	7	8	9	10
Spiritual	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	(10)

Name: B

Age: 32

**Questionnaire**  
**February 6, 1996**  
**Interview with C**

**I IDENTITY**

**Individual(s) definition of success:**

Q: What is your idea of living a good life?

A: Being happy with yourself, know what you want out of life and meeting your own expectations.

Q: What has been helpful to you that enabled you to live your life fully?

A: Reflecting on the lives of my ancestors, the lives of my parents and my whole family and all those people around me that I care about.

**Role Models:**

Q: Tell me about two people that you thought highly of and why?

A: My mother and my father....because they were very loving, ah they took care of me as a child and gave me special attention especially when I was a little girl and all through my life. They've always made me feel very special.

Q: How have those people affected you life?

A: I gained a lot of wisdom and knowledge from my father who left a very good influence on me, gave me a lot of ambition, gave me a lot of challenges and just inspired me in a lot of ways and from my mother I learned a lot about strength, determination and will power.

**II FACTORS**

**Historical Identity:**

Q: Describe your historical/Ancestral origins?

A: As fas as I know on my father's side our ancestors dates way back to the 1700's, our ancestors originated from Normandy which is now France and they were of French descent and came to the new world in the 1800's and started somewhere in the States and immigrated to Alberta which is where our grandfather and our father were born. On...the grandmother of my father, which would be my great-grandmother was part Sioux and Cree and her ancestry originated from XXXXXXXXXXXX Alberta from the Bush Cree and here parents were wiped out in during the flu epidemic and the small pox epidemic and she was raised mostly by relatives and the nuns and mission.

- Q:** Explain the areas you consider yourself knowledgeable about of your Aboriginal history?
- A:** The areas that I am most knowledgeable about is they're quite diversified from the Indian Act to the roles that the women play and, the roles that men play as far as on the reservation, the chief and council and, the roles are roles are pretty much the same as they have been for the past century where the role has been dominated by men but prior to that and it still is, decision makers were the women if you go to any meeting most of the decision making is done by the men however they will go back and deliberate and discuss their ideas with their wives and mother and its on those decisions that most of the men that are chiefs and councillors get the direction from and as far as the role of the women, on the daily basis they're still the caregivers, still the teachers of children in any of the schools in any of the fields where to work is to be done and, is being done and still the directors the teachers and again the overall decision makers, but most of all the caregivers.

**Level of Education:**

- Q:** Do you consider Aboriginal traditions a credible or valuable form of education?
- A:** A very credible, a very, ah what's the other word you said? Valuable. Valuable and being turned to more and more in the schools, ah from kindergarten up to high school, and in colleges. A lot of the teachers and the board of educational boards recognize that there is a great need to turn to teachers to know to turn to the teachers that have these ah knowledge and teaching traditional values, teaching traditional methods in the way of thinking and communicating especially in the discipline of younger people.
- Q:** How is this traditional Aboriginal knowledge used in your life today?
- A:** Ah, on a personal basis ah I call upon it and turn to it ah whenever. Traditional aboriginal knowledge I use in my daily life is gaining from the ah what I've learned over the years and ah making decisions I will turn to when there is confusion, turn to the grandfathers and grandmothers and to Creator to give me the guidance and whatever comes to mind is what I go with and most often it is the right decision and in ah other ways when people come to me and ask for direction or for question then I try to deal with it in the most ah understandable way that I can ah turning to within ah turning to my spirit to give me the guidance to help a person or at least answer in away that they will be comfortable and gain the most knowledge, and gain the most guidance from the question that they are seeking.
- Q:** Would you like further learnings in Traditional Aboriginal learning? Explain.
- A:** Oh yes one never really knows everything ah there is so much there to learn and in following the tradition and the culture we can never know everything that everyday there is something new to be learned and everyday there are lessons that

we sometimes overlook and ah realize and although we thought we knew all of that is there we come to realize that we didn't know everything there is to know.

Q: What level of formal education have you attained?

A: I have attained just business courses, ah from the whiteman's school, I have business administration. I have some courses in various areas.

Q: Do you feel satisfied in accomplishing that level of education?

A: Yes.

Q: If not, what level of education would you feel successful?

(Question not asked, yes above)

### **Family Context:**

Q: What is the nature of your spousal relationship?

A: I don't have a spouse, I have a friend.

Q: Do you have children? How many?

A: Yes, two sons.

Q: Is your immediate family your total support system?

A: Partly, immediate family meaning my two sons? Oh yes, they are my great support system.

Q: Explain how your extended family is supportive of you?

A: I have a part of my family who are ah my extended family. Meaning my brothers and my sisters.? I have some that are very supportive ah I think overall they are very supportive however, ah there are those who are supportive in anything that I do.

## **III ABORIGINAL TRADITIONS**

### **Language:**

Q: Do you speak and Aboriginal language?

A: ehe (yes in Cree language)

Q: How has speaking your Aboriginal language affected you positively?

A: It has kept me aware of who I am and it has given me a very positive identity and being comfortable and happy that I am a native woman and retaining my language certainly kept the idea, the spirit of who I am very much alive.

Q: How has speaking your Aboriginal language affected you negatively?

A: It hasn't.

Q: Do you think it is necessary to know your Aboriginal language?

A: It's very necessary.

Q: Can you explain?

A: It opens the doors to communication when you are praying cause it makes it a lot more connected to the Creator and the grandfathers and grandmothers who ah as we are told ah understand wholly in you own language, the language that you were born with is the give that was given to you and if you don't, if you don't use it, or you're ah ah are misfortunate enough to not know it then you don't totally know who you are, at least your spirit has a difficult time understanding you when you pray.

Q: Would you like to learn English better?

A: No.

### **Oral Tradition Learnings**

Q: 1. Have you received a traditional name? Tell me about it?

A: Yes.

Q: Can you tell me about it?

A: My name is XXXX XXXX XXXXX. A name that I use only for ceremonial purposes ah it was given to me in a ceremony and I have not given, been given the direction to use it at any other time.

Q: 2. Have you participated in traditional ceremonies? Name them.

A: Oh yes, ah for a long time.

Q: Can you describe them?

A: In the traditional ah questions like theses ah we need to remind ourselves that we can only share up to a point and anything that requires ah knowledge about the spiritual realm of who we are as pipe carriers there needs to be offerings of tobacco.

Q: Tell me how your participation in traditional ceremonies affects your life?

A: On a personal level ah my life is affected in that I get more insight. I get clarity, I get more strength and certainly ah more wisdom and a better understanding, and a better connection to Creator and the spiritual realm.





**Questionnaire**  
**February 16, 1996**  
**Interview with D.**

**1. IDENTITY**

**Individual(s) definition of success:**

Q: What is your idea of living a good life?

A: Well, is this taking too long (ha)?

Q: No, no take your time, just take your time.

A: To be able to get an education, try to do something for myself.  
 Just nod when you're done.

Q: What has been helpful to you that enabled you to live your life fully?

A: But I don't have the education to do what I want to do.

Q: That stopped you?

A: yeah because.

Q: Do you think you've lived your life you know, do you live a full life?

A: No, I don't think so.

Q: Why?

A: Because I have too many problems right now (ha) it's that way.

Q: Okay.

**Role Models:**

Q: Tell me about two people that you thought highly of and why?

A: Thought highly, there's a woman in XXXXXXXXX, she works in a private adoption agency. Well the reason why is ah I guess because of what she does.

Q: Her profession?

A: Yeah, and she can do anything she wants she runs her own business and everything. There's ah there's some secret side of her that like, like well she was a medical foster parent before.

Q: What is that?

A: A foster parent, she takes in handicapped kids.

Q: Oh. Is there another person?

A: I guess people with ah, with ah native culture, what they're doing because I don't have a really, I don't really have any background on that. I know some stuff but from my grandparents but I don't really, I'm not into, into it but I really like to learn some more.

Q: Did you think highly of your grandparents?

A: Yeah, my parents too, especially my dad.

Q: How have those people affected your life?

A: My parents?

Q: The people you thought highly of.

A: Like how?

Q: Did you want to be like them, or did you, did they help you in some way, it could be like even the way you think it could be the way you dress, it could be anything?

A: Yeah, the woman she helped me in rough spots back then. Uh-huh, and for my parents and my grandparents, I guess of what they know about the Indian way. I wouldn't mind knowing that stuff which I never thought was nothing before now I do (ha).

## II FACTORS

### Historical Identity:

Q: Describe your historical/Ancestral origins?

A: They were both Cree, full blooded Cree, so is my grandparents on both sides.

Q: Explain the areas you consider yourself knowledgeable about of your Aboriginal history? (I had to rephrase some questions, Tell me what you know about being Indian, D is fluent Cree speaker).

A: Ha, everything about the bush I guess.

Q: That's what I want to know, tell me.

A: Like what? Tell me what you want to know about the bush.

Q: I want to know about the bush.

A: About the bush?

Q: Yeah.

A: Okay, everything I guess.

Q: Okay, you hunt and skin rabbits and..

A: Yeah, skin moose hides.

Q: Okay, what do you know about the spirit of the bush?

A: Spirit of the bush.

Q: You know that Indian way.

A: Well the only thing I know and I heard about is well my dad talks to me a lot about it, is ah the Indian medicine, how it works, how, what kind of stuff to look for and how you can and how it can affect you

Q: Good or bad?

A: Some are good, both.

Q: Tell me about your best one.

A: Okay, one time my dad told me that, like he does spiritual ways, like if you really hurt somebody that's the only thing that you're supposed to look out for, when somebody talks to you in person, like something is going to happen to you. If you make somebody mad then this is going to happen to you, see if somebody says that to you, you really have to look out for that.

**Level of Education:**

Q: Do you consider Aboriginal traditions a credible or valuable form of education?

A: Yeah, I guess so in some ways.

Q: How?

A: Well, that's what I really was saying that I really want to learn some more that's what I was saying.

Q: How is traditional Aboriginal knowledge used in your life today?

A: How is it used? Well to me right now it's really nothing to me right now because I don't really, I just take what my dad has told me about some stuff, that's what I take and respect my dad for that, that what I mean the Indian way.

Q: Do you speak Cree all the time?

D: All the time.

Q: Then it's used in your life.

Q: Would you like further learnings in Traditional Aboriginal learning? Explain.

A: Yeah I would like to learn more about it and how to go about it and to understand more about it.

Q: What level of formal education have you attained?

A: Right now I'm doing grade nine.

Q: Do you feel satisfied in accomplishing that level of education?

A: Yeah I do.

Q: If not, what level of education would you feel successful?

A: To get my ah well the way I'm going is I want to get my grade twelve from there on I'd like to go to do something else a dream.

Q: Would you like to go to University?

A: I wouldn't mind.

Q: How many degrees?

A: I don't know (ha)

### **Family Context:**

Q: What is the nature of your spousal relationship?

A: Common-law.

Q: Do you have children? How many?

A: I have two boys, two girls.

Q: Is your immediate family your total support system? (Rephrased Q).

A: Yeah.

Q: Explain how your extended family is supportive of you (Rephrased Q).

A: They're not, I'm on my own.

### **III ABORIGINAL TRADITIONS**

#### **Language:**

Q: Do you speak your Aboriginal language?

A: Yes.

Q: How has speaking your Aboriginal language affected you positively?

A: Positively, is that ah (In a good way), In a good way, you mean how I can use that all the time, I guess I can understand more Cree people than the white people.

Q: And, any more?

A: No.

Q: How has speaking your Aboriginal language affected you negatively?  
 A: Well when I, well if I'm in a white society that really affected me especially if when I'm alone, I feel alone, I'm really down there (points down), instead of white people.

Q: Do you think it is necessary to know your Aboriginal language?  
 A: Yes, I think so.

Q: Would you like to learn English better?  
 A: I wouldn't mind learning English ah both them, both sides, I'd like to learn more about that either English.

### Oral Traditional Learnings

Q: Have you received a traditional name? Tell me about it?  
 A: No.

Q: Have you participated in traditional ceremonies. Name them.  
 A: Never been to one, because ah my dad he knows all that stuff but he never he never goes anywhere with it like he knows all that stuff but he never does that.

Q: Tell me how your participation in traditional ceremonies affects your life?  
 A: (na)

### Overall Health

Rate your overall health in each of the categories by circling one of the following:  
 - Physical

	1	2	3	4	5	6	(7)	(8)	9	10		
Mental			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	(8)	9	10
Emotional			1	2	3	4	5	(6)	7	8	9	10
Spiritual			1	2	3	4	(5)	6	7	8	9	10

Name: D

Age: 34

**Questionnaire**  
**March 10, 1996**  
**Interview with E.**

**I IDENTITY**

**Individual(s) definition of success:**

Q: What is your idea of living a good life?

A: My ideal of living a good life uh would be to ah, because I was brought up through these ways it would be ah not smoke, oh well not drink I should actually think not no drinking, no gambling, to live this life of ah sweats, ceremonies, a spiritual life. Always being good to yourself, you know not making material, not being materialistic, ha, ha, that's the main points.

Q: What has been helpful to you that enabled you to live your life fully?

A: That has helped me? Ah my spiritual ways. Again it really helped me, when I, like when I really started getting involved with them I was able to experience new things, and I was learned, I was taught how to public speak and take good care of myself and those are the main things that helped me become who I am today.

**Role Models:**

Q: Tell me about two people that you thought highly of and why?

A: Two people I thought highly of, first would be A, okay, because she was, she takes good care of herself she ah, the way she handles herself with people, like with me she really ah, the impact like she really had a lot of help with me, like I had a lot of help from her and she really affected my life and she really showed me how to ah be a good person and how to understand. Another person who I thought highly of who I still think highly of, ah that one's a hard one. With everybody I try and see their best qualities. Ah I'd have to say my mom now because she ah, from how she was when I was younger and how far she's come today. Maybe she doesn't have material things like her own home but, it's her being, you know how she's changing and all the things she goes through.

Q: How have those people affected you life?

A: Well I'll tell you the way, okay ah I'll tell you the difference between the two of them kind of struck me. Ah, A taught me through ah talking to me as a friend rather than somebody older and you know she listened to me and the she you know I listened to her so we helped each other out we talked as friends on a one to one basis. And with my mother she had a whole different way of teaching me. She ah, she's very stern and she's ah she has a mean way of doing things but you know, you know through all our fights you know I honest, even though at some times you know I thought I'd just couldn't stand her because we really fought a lot

but now that I look back on it I can honestly say you know those were the times that I learned the most from her.

## II FACTORS

### Historical Identity:

Q: Describe your historical/Ancestral origins?

A: Okay, well I'm from the Blackfoot tribe which are XXXXXX. It's part of the Treaty XXXX. Ah, it's south west of XXXXXXXXX.

Q: Your parents. Where did your parents come from?

A: Okay, ah my mother is from ah the Blood tribe and my father is from the XXXXX tribe and I'm registered under the XXXX tribe. Ah as far as I know, I don't know too much about my ancestry, you know my grandparents, great-grandparents because ah well basically from my great-grandparents on because like on my dad's side he doesn't really he hasn't gone over my family tree with me, so I don't really know that side and my mom her she doesn't know part she only knows to a certain point then she doesn't. It's kind of everybody has a different say on what is ha ha what was ha ha.

Q: Explain the areas you consider yourself knowledgeable about of your Aboriginal history?

A: Knowledgeable. Ah, ah well for speaking as a younger person okay, ah I have a lot of knowledge on how to be respectful and that's one thing that I really stress is that to be respectful because these ah teenagers now a days they have no respect and I was really brought up strict and you know I was ah once my mom brought me into home and we ate she always made us girls do dishes so now you know out of respect and help you know when I go into somebody else's house you know I have respect for their stuff, I don't touch it I don't dig ah you know I really have to ah stress ah respect.

### Level of Education:

Q: Do you consider Aboriginal traditions a credible or valuable form of education?

A: Yes I do.

Q: How is this traditional Aboriginal knowledge used in your life today?

A: Ah it's used in everything I do. Ah, the way I ah, treat people, the way I treat myself, the way I live my life and the decisions I make now the spiritual upbringing affects my everyday living.

Q: Would you like further learnings in Traditional Aboriginal learning? Explain.

A: Yes I would



Q: How?

A: Ah, I would like to learn ah basically to be a proper lady ha ha to be honest like ah a lot of these girls you know I see younger girls do even, fifteen years old and you know they have these babies and yet they're still running around you know me I want to be able to learn all the ah woman's duties, I want to be ah I want to work on myself before I enter any kind of marriage.

Q: What level of formal education have you attained?

A: My university.

### **Family Context:**

Q: What is the nature of your spousal relationship?

A: Ah well yesterday I was, and in the evening I wasn't ha ha I'm single now ha ha.

Q: Do you have children? How many?

A: No.

Q: Is your immediate family your total support system?

A: Ah, No.

Q: Explain how your extended family is supportive of you?

A: Ah there's only, like I know like, I'm not close to any of my aunties or my uncles on my dad's side for sure. On my mom's side I have two and ah I haven't really you know visited them, I guess I'm not close to my family so I'd have to say that really maybe just one ah my uncle M, he's on my dad's side he's trying to you know start some place and he's probably the only one right now.

Q: Emotional support?

A: Yep.

### **III. ABORIGINAL TRADITIONS**

#### **Language:**

Q: Do you speak your Aboriginal language?

A: No, I don't.

Q: How has speaking your Aboriginal language affected you positively?

A: (na)

Q: How has speaking your Aboriginal language affected you negatively?

A: (na)

Q: Do you think it is necessary to know your Aboriginal language?

A: Yes I do..

Q: Would you like to learn English better?

A: No, ha ha ha.

**Oral Traditional Learnings**

Q: Have you received a traditional name? Tell me about it?

A: Yes I have.

Q: Can you tell me about it?

A: Okay my Indian name is ~~XXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXX XXXXXX~~, from what I know about my name ah my guardian spirit is the summer wind ah my duty is to make people laugh ah that about covers it.

Q: Have you participated in traditional ceremonies?

A: Yes, I have.

Q: Can you name them?

A: Ah like you mean Sundance, sweat, pipe ceremony ah, ha ha ha feast ah smudge ha that's daily one ha ha ha.

Q: Tell me how your participation in traditional ceremonies affects your life?

A: Ah every time I'm part of one it helps me its like ah when I go when I participate in it once its done I feel so it's a feeling that indescribable its ah just really refreshing it just feels I got this new energy I have a new outlook every time and it's a real positive feeling ah it's ah just helps me with my thinking my functioning and my health as well.

**Overall Health**

Rate your overall health in each of the categories by circling one of the following:

							+		
Physical	1	2	3	4	(5,X2)	6	7	8	9 10
Mental	1	2	3	4	5	6	(7)	8	9 10
Emotional	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 (10) 11
Spiritual	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	(8)	9 10

Name: E

Age: 20

**Questionnaire**  
**March 13, 1996**  
**Interview with E.**

**I IDENTITY**

**Individual(s) definition of success:**

Q: What is your idea of living a good life?

A: Ah I guess it's free of any alcohol or drug abuse, and doing something that you like that you feel good about be it living at home looking after children going to, going to school and basically doing what you feel good about doing.

Q: What has been helpful to you that enabled you to live your life fully?

A: Ah I guess getting a job being able to go out working. Ah basically having something to do during the day and look forward to going to work everyday.

**Role Models:**

Q: Tell me about two people that you thought highly of and why?

A: Ah (pause) I can't really say any two people there's a lot of people that I've found something that I like about them, like a lot of people that go to school and want to do something with their lives who enjoy going to school and then, there's those that have careers and that are enjoying their careers, basically just seeing people that go out and try to be successful.

Q: What's successful to you?

A: I guess that you have something that you just dream about doing and you finally accomplish it, that's successful.

Q: How have those people affected your life?

A: It's given me the ah it's just basically just given me the ah initiative to want to strive for better, to go out and do something and be proud of it.

**II FACTORS**

**Historical Identity:**

Q: Describe your historical/Ancestral origins?

A: My dad and mom are both Blackfoot. My dad is from the XXXXXXX, and my mom is from the XXXXXX reserve, and I was raised mostly with the XXXXXXX.

Q: How far back can you go?

A: Just as far as my grandfather, grandparents.

Q: On you father's or mother's side?

A: On both sides.

Q: Is there any other bloodline, like another nationality?

A: Other nationality? Well I'm really not sure, maybe on my mom's side there was some non-native white person or white relative.

Q: Do you know what that would be?

A: Great grandparent or great-great grandparent.

Q: French, Scottish or...?

A: No, I don't know, English, I think.

Q: Explain the areas you consider yourself knowledgeable about of your Aboriginal history?

A: Knowledgeable? I don't feel that knowledgeable. I know a little bit of sweats and pipe ceremonies, ah the dancing, ah but just vaguely, not, not a whole lot.

#### **Level of Education:**

Q: Do you consider Aboriginal traditions a credible or valuable form of education?

A: Yeah, yeah it is like a lot of ah something that you know you've been raised with a lot of the time you live it but then like then there's also having to adapt to the white man's world but then that's easy for the younger generation but at the same time they're being raised with values although a lot of them may not practice it. They either have a parent or a grand-parent that has given them the knowledge of it, they just don't practice it.

Q: Is that knowledge only physical?

A: Physical? No, I guess it's verbal, a lot of it, or a lot of it is just kind of instinctive. I've noticed like some things are basically just showing respect to your elders. Ah, what else is there, knowing about these, like sweat lodges and that, that you show respect for them and you don't, you know, a lot of people are told about but they know that you don't go around there drinking.

Q: How do you think that they know?

A: I'm not really sure they know unless it's, it probably goes back to the grandparent or some relative that follows and tells them not to do that or?

- Q: How is this traditional Aboriginal knowledge used in your life today?  
A: Ah, ah, well I practice a little, some of it to an extent, but not ah although I should be going to more sweats and praying a lot more, but I do practice it when I think about it or yeah basically when I do think about it I go home and pray. I go to a sweat or attend a ceremony.
- Q: Would you like further learnings in Traditional Aboriginal learning? Explain.  
A: Further learning in or about? Yeah I would like to learn more about what other tribes like other like the people from down East, or the people in the Southern States. I'd like to learn more about what their traditions and their beliefs were or are. It would be, I find it very interesting.
- Q: What level of formal education have you attained?  
A: My grade 12 and I took a year of secretarial studies.
- Q: Do you feel satisfied in accomplishing that level of education?  
A: No, I feel like I want to go and attend a further, a higher education-university is what I've been thinking about attending next September.
- Q: What field would you go into?  
A: Well, I was thinking about some sort of business management classes, or else teaching.
- Q: You would feel successful with that?  
A: Yeah.
- Q: If not, what level of education would you feel successful?  
A: (see above)

#### **Family Context:**

- Q: What is the nature of your spousal relationship?  
A: Nature?
- Q: Are your married, or?  
A: No, I'm single.
- Q: Do you have children? How many?  
A: Two.
- Q: Is your immediate family your total support system?  
A: No.

Q: Explain how your extended family is supportive of you?

A: Oh, they help me out when I need the help. They're there ah to support me in, not just financially but just and being there, being supportive with things I want to do or accomplish.

### III ABORIGINAL TRADITIONS

#### Language:

Q: Do you speak your Aboriginal language?

A: No.

Q: How has speaking your Aboriginal language affected you positively?

A: (n/a)

Q: How has speaking your Aboriginal language affected you negatively? (n/a)

A: (na)

Q: Do you think it is necessary to know your Aboriginal language?

A: Well I've gotten so far without it but I would like to ah, I feel, I feel it would be necessary just to hang onto that, that part of heritage, I guess.

Q: Would you like to learn English better?

A: English better? Well no because it's my primary language, I'd rather learn another.

#### Oral Traditional Learnings

Q: Have you received a traditional name? Tell me about it?

A: Yeah.

Q: Can you tell me about it?

A: Well I received two, once when I was just a baby, from my grandfather, and ah then when my parents started going to sweats and that one I received when I was older.

Q: What are they?

A: Aah, one's in Blackfoot.

Q: Can you say it in Blackfoot?

A: I'll give it a try ha ha (says in Blackfoot).

Q: And it means...?

A: I really don't know what it means. My mom's tried to get it translated but she's never been able to find somebody who could interpret it. I guess it is a very, very old Blackfoot word.

Q: Oh, nice. And the other one.

A: The other one is, XXX XXXXXXX XXX XXXXXXX.

Q: Have you participated in traditional ceremonies? Name them.

A: Pipe ceremony, sweats, I don't know if they have other names.

Q: Tell me how your participation in traditional ceremonies affects your life?

A: I guess it just gives me a sense of a, a Creator or a higher power. Ah it just gives me some sort of, I guess guidance to how my life should be rather than being lost, like a lot of other people, they haven't had that opportunity, weren't raised with it, or they're too Catholic. They don't believe in, you know, that they're on the streets, lost, whereas I know it's there. It something that I've been given. I've been lucky enough to take part in, I guess and it just shows me that there is a life that could be so much more better, you could lead your life in so much better way that being, I guess abusing drugs and alcohol, or else just be not believe or not having a faith in a higher power.

**Overall Health**

Rate your overall health in each of the categories by circling one of the following:

		-							+	
Physical	1	2	3	4	5	(6)	7	8	9	10
Mental	1	2	3	4	5	6	(7)	8	9	10
Emotional	1	2	3	4	(5)	6	7	8	9	10
Spiritual	1	2	3	(4)	5	6	7	8	9	10

Name: F

Age: 23

ROLE MODELS: Mom, dad qualities: ambition, brave, courage to brave outer world.

**Questionnaire**  
**March 16, 1996**  
**Interview with G.**

**I IDENTITY**

**Individual(s) definition of success:**

Q: What is your idea of living a good life?

A: My idea of living a good life is having spirituality and being connected to you the land and you know just being able to ah take care of yourself ah you know to you know get your own food like gardening you know stuff like that and just learning and growing, hey.

Q: What has been helpful to you that enabled you to live your life fully?

A: Ah spending time with my grandparents they taught me how to you know to live off the land yeah and, and then meeting an Elder like XXXX eh, being my elder and teaching me in the right direction yeah and ah its you know the elders in my life that have enabled me to live my life fully because of the wisdom they tell you things and they have handed down some kind of life that you can use and pass on to your children, yep.

**Role Models:**

Q: Tell me about two people that you thought highly of and why?

A: Two people would be my grandmother ah her blackfoot name is ah (says name in Blackfoot language) and because of her hard work and ways and ah you know praying. She always stressed that we prayed was one of the ways and ah the other one would be the elder for teaching me you know how to use the pipe.

Q: How have those people affected your life?

A: They've influenced me because of their guidance and the way they've talked to me, I try and live by what they tell me because I am because I've ah experienced what they have told me and experiencing what I've been affected that way like it's positive like know, positive things.

**FACTORS**

**Historical Identity:**

Q: Describe your historical/Ancestral origins?

A: Ah I come from ah I always kind of stress my one side of the family, they would be my mom's family, like my grandmother (Blackfoot name) and my grandfather (Blackfoot name) and they ah right now I've been told which clan we're from but I



can't remember the name of the clan so we come from the clan on that side of ah, my grandfather's side on my mom's side.

Q: Do you know the English translation for it?

A: Ah the English name would be ah, ah it's kind of like the way they were they ah, things aren't taken lightly hey. If somebody did something they would work on it like kind of in a competitive way, gave it something that they would try harder to do that and I can't remember that name cause this old man told me hay and told then I was going to go back and tell him hey, it's not a like it's not a simple thing like XXXXXXXX thing. It is something he told me in Blackfoot hey so that's why like I, I have to go back and see.

Q: Explain the areas you consider yourself knowledgeable about of your Aboriginal history?

A: Ah I guess knowing where the waters are and some of the plants hey, those and Ah, ah Sage and ah female Sage ah you know plants that's part of the land and the trees and the rivers and the lakes.

#### **Level of Education:**

Q: Do you consider Aboriginal traditions a credible or valuable form of education?

A: I, I really do, I really consider Aboriginal traditions a very valuable form of education.

Q: How is this traditional Aboriginal knowledge used in your life today?

A: I use it everyday because I smudge and I pray and I seek elders for direction and all that and then I try and pass on what I know to the younger people cause I really feel they need to know about that.

Q: Would you like further learnings in Traditional Aboriginal learning? Explain.

A: Yes I would and I am learning, learning like learning from an Elder, other Elders are you know back home they're telling you think and so I'm learning.

Q: What level of formal education have you attained?

A: Ah the University level.

Q: Do you feel satisfied in accomplishing that level of education?

A: Ah well it helped me to grow and I did learn ah things you know like ah about European history and all that I learned-that was emphasized.

Q: If not, what level of education would you feel successful?

A: Ah well even though I have spent like ah more than four years at a University level I still feel like I need to learn more hey keep learning.

**Family Context:**

Q: What is the nature of your spousal relationship?

A: Ah well like ah separation I guess you call it.

Q: Do you have children? How many?

A: Four of them.

Q: Is your immediate family your total support system?

A: My family is very supportive yep.

Q: Explain how your extended family is supportive of you?

A: Because I have to go to work, because I have to go to these classes because I have to leave like sometimes to learn and ah they're there for me like my sister and my mom take care of my children for me they're there for me in those ways hey taking care of my children.

Q: Emotional support?

A: Yeah, they're there.

**III ABORIGINAL TRADITIONS****Language:**

Q: Do you speak your Aboriginal language?

A: Yes, I speak Blackfoot.

Q: How has speaking your Aboriginal language affected you positively?

A: I feel you know our native language like it's ah like when you say one word it just means just one thing hey with the English language I find not that I hate the language I like it but it's just that like sometimes one word has so many meanings so it's like that.

Q: How has speaking your Aboriginal language affected you negatively?

A: I don't think it has affected me negatively.

Q: Do you think it is necessary to know your Aboriginal language?

A: Yes.

Q: Would you like to learn English better?

A: Ha I've been told I should learn English better (laughs) yeah I'm working on it.

### Oral Traditional Learnings

Q: Have you received a traditional name? Tell me about it?

A: Yes I have.

Q: Can you tell me about it?

A: Ah it's, it's, my spiritual name and it's ah XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXX and the beautiful moccasin means that you know I'm able to travel hey like sometimes I could be in a lot of places in a short period of time and it's a gift hey, I've always had it I've really travelled and I used to run hey just before it used to get summer and ah and ah I think that's all part of life you know my name and then the other part, ah, singing part you know when we're in a sweat lodge when we're singing I'm able gifted that way to call on the spirits to help me and the XXXXXXXX part is just the dreaming part.

Q: Have you participated in traditional ceremonies? Name them.

A: Yeah, ah in ceremony, ceremonies, sweat lodges and those ones I've participated in.

Q: Tell me how your participation in traditional ceremonies affects your life?

A: They were real learning experiences hey and they, they really helped hey like with, with ah with ah like I needed healing so I went to these ceremonies and they really helped me with that part.

### Overall Health

Rate your overall health in each of the categories by circling one of the following:

	-									+
Physical	1	2	3	(4)	5	6	7	8	9	10
Mental	1	2	3	4	(5)	6	7	8	9	10
Emotional	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	(9)	10
Spiritual	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	(9)	10

Name: G

Age: Did not want to reveal age.

**Questionnaire**  
**March 16, 1996**  
**Interview with H.**

**I IDENTITY**

**Individual(s) definition of success:**

Q: What is your idea of living a good life?

A: Well my idea of living a good life is living a well balanced life and that's living your life with ah a good mind your heart and your spirit in balance and that kind of a life helps you to fulfill your life in a good way.

Q: What has been helpful to you that enabled you to live your life fully?

A: Well when I started when I first met X XXX X XXXXXXXX I met her in 1982 and ah that's when I first became aware of like ah the spirituality. My life and ah she that's how I became fully aware of ah how to live your life in a balanced way by attending ah the sweat lodge or going to the sweat lodge and it's like going inside the mother's womb again and going and you ah going there to purify yourself ah that's what has helped me in my in my daily life.

**Role Models:**

Q: Tell me about two people that you thought highly of and why?

A: The two people the two ladies that I think highly of in my life are the first one is R and ha I have the highest degree of respect for her because of how she lives her daily life and ah, ah I look up to her and she's helped me to see certain points in my life that I knew I had to deal with and ah the other person that I think highly of is my niece V. She's highly motivated and ah I look up to her for that in her work experiences and working areas.

Q: How have those people affected your life?

A: Well with R she's had a great affect in my life. I've learned a lot about my spirituality which was ah which I was not aware of at the at the time I met her and ah through her teachings I've learned a great deal of things in my life that I know are helpful to me to my children and to my grandchildren.. Now and ah I ah if I need any kind of, if I'm in doubt of anything I know she's always there to help me with my doubts and it's and after a while I look at them and they're positive things in my life that I've been able to accomplish. Any, my niece has affected my life to the point where I want to continue with my career in life working as a social worker.

## II FACTORS

### Historical Identity:

Q: Describe your historical/Ancestral origins?

A: Well at this point I'm not really aware of ah you know I'm not really familiar with the history of ah my background and that's what I'm planning to do is to research so that I have a clear understanding of it.

Q: What tribe are you?

A: Blackfoot.

Q: And your parents?

A: My parents are Blackfoot.

Q: Their parents?

A: Yes.

Q: Their parents before them?

A: No, that's where I see on my father's side there's Scottish blood and his father married, married ah into married a Scottish woman that's what I have to do research on, so that I have a clear understanding of it.

Q: Explain the areas you consider yourself knowledgeable about of your

A: Aboriginal history?

Q: Well about out Blackfoot?

A: Well that's something I have to do, I don't want to comment on that because I'm not really familiar with that.

### Level of Education:

Q: Do you consider Aboriginal traditions a credible or valuable form of education?

A: Well it's a tradition ah and I think that what you want to know what we were brought up with from our parents we learned all about the traditions in our life and we've carried that on.

Q: How is this traditional Aboriginal knowledge used in your life today?

A: Okay like what do they mean by this traditional knowledge?

Q: Something like if you have your language all the concepts and all the traditions, like respect are built in. If that 's an area you know a lot about, that could be something or it could even be your language, it could be anything.

A: Okay, well with our language, I find with our language when we speak our language that our language has a lot more meaning than when we use it when we use it, if we try to explain something in English it sort of loses the importance if ut and also when you tell a you know a joke in our own language and you translate it you loose the humour of it, you know.

Q: Do you know a short one?

A: Oh I don't know. I'll just give you an example, my niece who doesn't speak ah Blackfoot and ah if we're talking and we say something and it will be really funny and we'll be talking about it and then I'll translate it to her and it won't even, it doesn't you know, she doesn't think it's funny because it kind of loses even if I try to explain it as you know like I can but it still loses so I think when the translation takes place it takes away the meaning.

Q: Would you like further learnings in Traditional Aboriginal learning? Explain.

A: Uh huh.

Q: How, What?

A: Well by, I guess by going back to ah I know I can learn a lot from my mother, she's the one that's taught me a lot, and by my father by you know the respect and ah respect for, I'll give you an example. In the earlier years when a father in law, a son in law never seen his mother you know because they had so much respect for each other that they ah that separation was really ah greatly respected you know like they wouldn't if they happen to come into the same room my grandmother would immediately cover her face with her shawl because she was she believed in not having you know a direct contact with her, my father. That respect was so ah so, so well respected that you know on that and we were as were growing up we were taught to have respect. I was ah brought up respecting my brothers with a high degree of respect. I respected their, the individual as a person with ah and also with ah I didn't you know try to probe into their life or anything like that. If they wanted to share something with me they would tell me and ah where you, you learn to respect you were brought up to respect your parents because they were and you didn't talk back to your parents. The guidance, the guidance and the discipline were all, were all in hand and you knew that as a child.

Q: What level of formal education have you attained?

A: Well I have my ah diploma in social work and I've taken other ah programs on, on natives on native social work.

Q: Do you feel satisfied in accomplishing that level of education?

A: Yes I do and a lot I, in working with my own people on the reserve I find that ah a

piece of paper, a paper with ah you know a degree does not apply to the lifestyle on the reserve because the lifestyle is so different on the reserve to the lifestyle of the mainstream society and when you're in there then you deal with compassion, you deal with understanding and knowledge and background of the individual that you have an encounter with, whereas if you live off the reserve it's a lot more ah I guess I, I don't know you, you know like the atmosphere is cold and distant and the people that you meet with are not you know like you don't know the history of the people you work with and in my experience of that, I've worked off the reserve as a social worker and I've found it really distant and cold in that atmosphere.

Q: If not, what level of education would you feel successful? N/A

### **Family Context:**

Q: What is the nature of your spousal relationship?

A: Oh I don't have a relationship right now.

Q: Do you have children? How many?

A: Yes I do.

Q: How many?

A: I have two children, two boys. My eldest is twenty-six and my youngest one is twenty-three.

Q: Is your immediate family your total support system?

A: Ah yes, well yes and no, my immediate family is a support, a strong support system to me and also my extended family.

Q: Explain how your extended family is supportive of you?

A: Okay, my extended family that means like ah my cousins.

Q: All of them?

A: Okay I, I come from a big family so my ah my immediate family, my children and my grandchildren are the ones that are my you know I guess they're at the front line of my support system. My brothers and my sisters are a good support system and my mother and I have a real good support system with my cousin and ah she's the one that I look up to. If I'm in any kind of ah doubt of anything I'll usually ask her about it, how would she deal with the situation.

### III ABORIGINAL TRADITIONS

#### Language:

Q: Do you speak your Aboriginal language?

A: Yes I do.

Q: How has speaking your Aboriginal language affected you positively?

A: Well speaking my language has been very positive in my life. I grew up with, with my language and that was my first language and ah it's been a real benefit to me.

Q: How has speaking your Aboriginal language affected you negatively?

A: I don't find that it has ever affected me negatively in any way.

Q: Do you think it is necessary to know your Aboriginal language?

A: Yes I do, it's very helpful and ah it's when you speak your language and it has so much more meaning and it can explain something more thoroughly in your language than when you translate it into English and that's a real ah that's real helpful to me on my job. I feel when I explain something to my client and if, if I explain everything in my language they have a better understanding of it and rather than speaking in English.

Q: Would you like to learn English better?

A: Oh I don't think I can learn it any better than I already know.

#### Oral Traditional Learnings

Q: Have you received a traditional name?

A: Yes.

Q: Tell me about it?

A: Well I had an Indian name. I have an Indian name from childhood and ah my grandmother gave me the name and ah then I received my, I use the name that I received in her ceremony from the spirit world and that is (say in Blackfoot language).

Q: How, what's your childhood name?

A: My childhood name is (says in Blackfoot language).

Q: What does it mean?

A: Well that means ah somebody that calls from above, you know.

Q: Have you participated in traditional ceremonies? Name them.

A: Yes I have.





**APPENDIX III**

**Intrinsic Chants: Ethics**

### Intrinsic Chants: Ethics

The interview data was gathered from members of the Buffalo Robe and Medicine Society in 1996. The anonymity of all of the participating interviewees is kept as agreed upon by interviewees and interviewer. In keeping with the oral tradition, the spirituality aspect discussed at any time remained unwritten with regards to the participants traditional names or identities and/or subject matter relating to specific traditional practices.

This data was the beginnings of a project later offered in the form of workshops in the Calgary area, providing the continuance and consistency of the oral history tradition for Aboriginal women. The workshops explored the role of Aboriginal women in the Aboriginal culture. That project was developed for the Buffalo Robe and Medicine Society and was named: Voices of Our Grandmothers, Kohkominowak-Opiikiskwewin. The interviewees' contribution to this project was greatly appreciated and necessary in the developmental stages.