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Through Silence We Speak: Approaches to Counselling and Psychotherapy with Canadian First Nation Clients

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Abstract

Canadian First Nations are composed of 53 different cultures. Key forces are a sense of community, respect for elders, and deep values and religious beliefs promoting growth. Counselling issues include assimilation, post-traumatic stress, addictions, cultural identification, health, and issues caused by societal rupture. Non-Native counsellors may be seen as unhelpful or even potentially harmful to community strengths. Counselling methods need to be based on deep respect, benefit to the community, spirituality, and values. Skills include listening in a way that gives meaning to both verbal and nonverbal messages, growth from one's own hardships, and being helpful versus using technique.

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to give an overall view of current approaches to counselling with First Nations clients. In our view, these approaches must combine traditional sources of belief systems with current and well-tested models of counselling and psychotherapy in order to better serve this particularly vulnerable population. To accomplish this goal, we will proceed in three segments: first, a brief description of First Nations populations from a sociohistorical perspective, second, a discussion of specific instances of therapeutic models and experiential knowledge acquired during the course of work among First Nations, and lastly, the relevant conclusions.

Sociohistorical Background

It is estimated that there are some 633 First Nations communities in Canada with a total population of about 1,000,000, speaking 53 languages (INAC, 2000). They account for about three per cent of the population of Canada, as in the United States. It is often stated that First Nations migrated to North America about 10,000 years ago. In fact, their history in the Americas appears to be much longer than that, up to possibly 50,000 years (Zazula, 1999).

The indigenous peoples of Canada generally refer to themselves under the term *First Nations* or *Native People*. This group includes the Inuit, Dene, Métis, and 49 distinct Amerindian cultures such as the Dakota, Cree, or Haida (INAC, 2000). It is difficult to make generalizations about counselling such a diverse group of people. For example, the Algonquin language and the Mohawk language have literally as much in common as English and Mandarin, yet the two nations occupy adjoining territory. The two cultures are equally diverse: the Algonquin are traditional hunters living in small villages with patrilineal structures, while the Mohawk are farmers living in larger towns and are matriarchal.

Just choosing a name to describe the people can be a challenge. For example, the term *aboriginal* is not acceptable in Europe; *indigenous* is not acceptable in China or South Africa; and the term *Indian* while acceptable in the USA, is not in Canada. To avoid further complications, we follow the nomenclature in use by Canadian First Nations themselves because we believe that it is an inherent right of peoples to choose their own name. Because of the cultural differences across groups, most people refer to themselves by their tribal names today (P. Alexander, personal communication, October 2002). Assimilationist processes have resulted in a loss of self-identification or collective awareness on the part of the Amerindian populations. For instance, of the estimated sixty Native languages that were spoken in Canada at first contact, seven have disappeared, and another fifty are endangered (York, 1992). Nevertheless, during the last twenty years some people have made an important effort to reverse the trend.

The Métis are a First Nations group that maintains a separate identity. They are the result of processes of creolization between Amerindian populations and French traders since the late 16th century. They are located largely in Manitoba, Canada. Their language is different from other First Nations in that it is an amalgamation between French and

different First Nations languages. They faced a different and particularly challenging history of oppression that has coloured their demands for recognition of ancestral and land rights (Lussier* & Sealey*, 1975; Adams, 1995).

Among the generally shared values of First Nations, Clare Brant (1990), a Mohawk psychiatrist, referred to non-interference, sharing, respect for elders, harmony with the land, and social responsibility. These are only general trends as there is much diversity between First Nations cultures. Oftentimes, differences in ethical outlook among First Nations can be larger than the difference between First Nations and Caucasians (Trimble* & Jumper-Thurman*, 2002).

The current Canadian reserve system was the product of a long series of historical occurrences. Much of what is Canada today was ceded in a series of treaties beginning in the 17th century (Dickason*, 1992). The major effort in treaty development, however, began in the mid 19th century. The main purpose of these treaties was to attempt to extinguish aboriginal land title and open the land for colonization.

In many of the treaties, lands were held aside for First Nations communities. These became known as reserves. Indian reserves have existed in Canada since the time of colonization. The majority of First Nations people still live on reserves. The balance have moved to urban settings mostly for employment or education. Cecil King* observed, "The reserves are the lands that the Indians reserved for their own use when they ceded their lands to the Crown" (personal communication, August 1999).

The challenges faced by the 633 nations relate to issues of rural life, urbanization, health, education, gender issues, business development, infrastructure, good governance, poverty reduction, and preserving environmental resources. Historically, the Canadian Government's approach to First Nations has been one of paternalism and assimilation, reducing their autonomy and causing socio-economic hardship (Mercredi*, 1999). Before White contact, the population in the area known today as Canada was between 500,000 and 2 million; after contact, the indigenous population was reduced to its lowest point of about 200,000. One nation, the Beothuk of Newfoundland, Canada, was extinguished; several other nations across Canada and the US were also lost (Dickason*, 1992; Larsen, 2000). In the 18th century, First Nations became the first recorded victims of what in effect may be considered to be biological warfare when they were given smallpox-infected blankets. Another instance of collective victimization took place in Canada's notorious residential schools. At the same time, Aboriginals fought in both world wars in significantly larger proportion than any other group in Canada. Yet unlike their American counterparts, they were denied basic rights such as voting, benefits or social security upon their return from service (Jenish, 2000).

Models of Counselling and Their Implications for First Nations Clients

Many years ago, with a newly won Master's degree in hand, Arthur Blue began an internship at a southern Idaho mental hospital where he was initiated into the art of patient contact and the practice of psychology. Many of the outpatients came to the hospital from the nearby reservation. A Medicine Man known to Art since childhood simply as Hosie

provided traditional Native American helping services to the population. Half a century later, Art can still picture him when he visited the hospital a few weeks into the internship. He knocked politely on the door, then entered and sat his bulky frame in a chair. Roughly cut shoulder length grey hair framed his ruddy, aging and chubby face. He did not speak nor even look at Art. He just sat, completely at one with the silence in the room.

Art had been seeing people with the usual range of diagnoses: conduct disorder, depression, alcohol abuse to name a few. Often, he found, a client would refer to relationships within his extended family as part or all of the problem. To Art, it seemed obvious and appropriate that this sort of difficulty lay in the domain of the Medicine Man. He would then suggest that these people gather a piece of cloth, some tobacco and sage as a gift and in the evening visit Hosie. Then Hosie came to visit Art.

Art was pleasantly surprised to see him, and thought, "Gee, this is the way that professionals work - good referrals, then case conferences." Though Art expected a case conference, he received a lesson instead. After thirty minutes of emptying, relaxing silence, Hosie spoke.

"I come to talk to you about all those people you bin sendin' me". He paused. Art was expectant, thinking of diagnoses and treatments. Then Hosie phrased the lesson as follows: "I can no longer handle all the people that yer sendin' me. Perhaps you should start dealin' with the problems that you are trained to work with and I will work with the spiritual problems that the people have. I can't do my work and your work too. Not enough time to do both".

As Art and Hosie continued to talk, it became obvious that Art was interpreting all problems as spiritual. To become an effective member of a treatment team, he needed to accept responsibility for the psychological aspects of the problems that patients presented and to aptly distinguish those from their spiritual dimension. His work with Medicine people has continued through the years since Hosie expanded his awareness and increased his knowledge and effectiveness. Through his silence, he spoke to Art about how to be more comfortable in his role and be more effective at what was done.

There was a city woman, single, well off, and with a master's degree in psychology working in a Western Canada reserve. She had a little trouble in adapting to the Native environment. One day the Dakota elder, Eli Taylor*, took her aside and said, "Thank you dear, for all the hard work you have done for the Native people in our community over the last three years." She thanked him profoundly; it's rare to get a direct compliment like that from an elder. "You have really added a lot to our community," Eli continued, "and we appreciate it very much." She thanked him even more profusely. Eli continued: "Now, however, it is time for you to go home and help your own people." The message was very clear. She was no dummy. She got a new job.

An equally idiosyncratic response but more encouraging, happened when a life skills counsellor discretely asked an elder, Zack Comtois, why the community was "putting up with all the weird shit" he was doing. The elder answered, "Because when you walk home, you pet the dogs and play with the children". The three of us (Blue, Darou & Ruano) have come to realize that much of the counselling that happens with First Nations people is

cross-cultural, whether it be between two people of two different First Nations, or whether it be between a First Nations person and a non-Native one.

Theoretical Principles and Conceptual Issues

First Nations Models of Existence

Many First Nations people believe there are clear links between the various orders of creation. They believe God created the physical world (the sun, moon). The physical world created the plant world in its own time, and the plant world in its own time created the animal world. The animals then created humans. Thus humans are the most dependent, and have in their own right created nothing. One cannot wipe out the animal world and have humans still exist: Humans are totally dependent on the other orders of creation (Johnston*, 1990; McCormick*, 1996).

As Rod McCormick* (2000) pointed out, European-based cultures generally have a very hierarchical, individualist worldview. In Euro-western models of creation, there is a three-level hierarchy of God, humans and nature. God dominates humans; humans master the animals; living beings exploit the land. The First Nations model, from western Canadian sources, is based on equality, connectedness, and harmony between humans and nature. The human is the least important and serves the others, thereby contributing to harmony in life. Following are some of the salient features and agentive elements in the iconic construction of First Nations identity.

The Medicine Wheel

The unity and balance of life are represented by the Medicine Wheel, a symbol that is found in many Amerindian cultures (Bopp, Bopp, Brown* & Lane*, 1984). It reflects life as a whole and is helpful for maintaining a balance between various aspects of existence. The Medicine Wheel also situates humans in relation to the universe as well as providing a terrestrial-based model of celestial phenomena (Faris, 1994).

The Medicine Wheel can, for example, offer a structure for problem solving. The eagle of the East represents the vision and intellect (identifying issues), the mouse of the South represents relationships (what exists now for the group), the bear of the West represents knowledge and feelings (reactions to the current situation), and the buffalo of the North represents physical action (what can be done) (Chevrier*, 1998). Even today, Medicine Wheels made of rocks aligned and placed in circles can be found all over the West, particularly on promontories and other prayer sites. These sites were used traditionally and still sometimes today for a ceremony of self-discovery and rite of adulthood called the vision quest. An example of an ancient Medicine Wheel can be found at:

http://archaeology.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://www.ari%2Daerc.org/dustdevil.htm

Poonwassie* and Charter* (2001) describe the importance of the Medicine Wheel in healing:

> The Medicine Wheel philosophy includes all stages of human development from birth to death and rebirth. It connects all stages with each other, with all living beings, and with all life in the universe, thus providing a place of centering for each person in the cosmos. An understanding of the Medicine Wheel is a starting point for helpers as well as those seeking healing (p. 66).

Elders

Counsellors can help empower their clients and the community by relinquishing their roles as experts and allow community healing practices and the elders to supply structure and the basis for learning. The advice a counsellor receives may at times be very powerful and often not what is expected. The advice given by elders is agentive in the sense that it places the advice as an instance of agency by the person and on the person. Elders have various roles, among them that of guiding agents through a journey of self-discovery and self-actualization. Therefore, it is clear that out of respect, if you ask an elder for help, you are morally obliged to follow through with the advice.

This is not to say that psychologists must abrogate their position as professionals. The elders understand this situation and will generally try not to put the professional in a difficult situation. If the question is delicate, they will generally mitigate it by answering with an interpretable story, a riddle or humour. The enigmatic responses at the beginning of this article are examples of this.

Simply being old does not necessarily make one an elder, although all old people must be respected. Non-Native counsellors can recognize who are in fact elders by carefully observing to whom the Native population turns for wisdom or help in troubling situations. It must also be noted that the elders may have differing or even conflicting views about ways to help.

Generosity

In most traditional First Nations societies, status was gained by giving not by hoarding. It was not the person who collected the greatest amount of goods who was respected, but the person (or family or clan) who gave away the most. This is seen today in the Sundance ceremony, illegal in Canada for most of the twentieth century, where participants and their families give away large amount of goods, even if they are of meagre means. It is the central act of the West Coast Potlatch, another ceremony that was illegal for decades. The give-away is an aspect of a generous society.

The importance of generosity seems surprisingly stable across contemporary First Nations. However, it can cause difficult value conflicts for people working in the wage system, particularly in urban environments.

Mistapeo and its Relations to the Algonkian Unconscious

Joseph Kurtness* or Kakwa, granduncle of psychologist Jacques Kurtness*, explains the relationship of the Mistapeo, literally, mista-napawo: great man, to the religion of the Innu (Cree, Naskapi, Montagnais) (Speck, 1935). Mistapeo is a small version of yourself that lives inside you. He represents your potential. Mistapeo represents an ethical factor present in the Innu soul. As Mistapeo becomes more willing and more active in the interests of his material abode, the body of the individual, he requires that the individual be honest, practice no deception and live a pure life. In particular he is pleased with generosity, kindness, and help to others. Besides these ethical precepts, there are others directed toward the satisfaction of animal remains: ethics toward animals.

> Here we have the basis of noteworthy good behavior of the uncivilized nomads, which has caused travelers to remark upon native honesty and generosity before they have been spoiled by emulating the traders, whose examples tend to make them irreligious (Speck, 1935, p. 25).

Marie-Lise Von Franz (1964), in a book edited and co-authored by Carl Jung, discussed the Jungian interpretation of the Mistapeo. In Jung's basic view of life, the soul of man is simply an inner companion, whom he calls my friend or Mistapeo. Mistapeo dwells in the heart and is immortal; in the moment of death, or shortly before, he leaves the individual and later may reincarnate himself. Those Innu who pay attention to their dreams and who try to find their meaning and test their truth can enter into a deeper connection with the Great Man. He favours such people and sends them more and better dreams. Thus the major obligation of an individual Innu is to follow the instructions given by dreams, and then to give permanent form to their contents in art or music. Lies and dishonesty drive the Mistapeo away from one's inner realm, whereas generosity and love of one's neighbours and of animals attract him and give him life.

Kurtness* (personal communication, May 1989) explained that this is the Cree ego in the sense that it is the real self. It is also the superego in the sense that it will punish you if you do not follow it.

George Daniels*, a Saultaux-Anishinabe elder, gave an example of working from the unconscious (personal communication, June 1978). As far as he and his fellow elders were concerned, it is no contradiction to practice and believe in both the Native religion and Christianity simultaneously. This can be extremely difficult for some non-Natives to reconcile. Claude Levi-Strauss (1995) explains this problem as the difference between the non-Native's linear logic, and the Native's logic of the senses. George Daniels said that the practice of having two religions at one time is particularly strong for the Métis of the plains; it also exists for some James Bay Crees who may have a town religion and a bush religion.

The concept of a Mistapeo would be understood among most Algonkian peoples, sometimes under a different name. The larger issue of communication with the spirit would be seen across Canadian First Nations.

Rules of Behavior

Clare Brant* (1990) described a series of rules of behavior of First Nations. A well-meaning but ethnocentric non-Native can easily misinterpret as psychopathology, these ethical principles of an honest and upright Native person. These rules are:

1. Non-interference: discourage coercion of any type;
2. Non-competitiveness: manage inter-group dynamics to suppress rivalry and possible embarrassment;
3. Emotional restraint: promote self-control and discourage strong or violent feelings, a rule common in many hunting societies. Brant* (personal communication, May 1995) commented that, "We (First Nations) repeatedly learn how clumsy White people are in reading apparently clear messages."

- Sharing: generosity discourages hoarding, again a valuable trait in a remote, egalitarian community;
- Suppression of ambition, as above;
- Flexiblity with respect to the concept of time; this is also found in many other groups that are in close harmony with nature;
- Teaching by modelling: Europeans generally teach by rewarding learners for successive approximations (shaping), while First Nations use modeling almost exclusively;
- Because children are seen as treasured beings, they are not punished. Other more respectful methods are used. In a traditional family, this same principle would be modeled from older children to younger children too;
- Not expressing gratitude or approval: the intrinsic reward of doing the deed is considered sufficient;
- Correction by teasing: gentle teasing is used to comment on behavior without causing the person to feel aggressed or humiliated. According to Brant*, shaming and ridiculing are also used in more serious situations, and may have long-term effects on how people develop the above behaviors,
- Projection of conflict: the above rules are promoted and reinforced by moving conflict to enemies or hypothetical or religious third parties.
- Protocol: Native society appears loose and unstructured to a casual observer, but in fact there is a bewildering array (to the outsider) of rules about almost everything.

Restoule* (1997) would add two rules to this, one regarding respect, and the other regarding extended families. Respect is particularly important in relations with people of wisdom such as elders. First Nations clients may have been taught to not look elders directly in the eyes, but to keep the eyes downcast. Direct eye contact may be perceived as confrontational or aggressive. Attneave* (1985) associates this with the story of "He who kills with his eyes" (p. 138). Similarly, between men and women it can be seen as a

sexually aggressive gesture, and can lead to perceived sexual transference or counter-transference. Also, handshaking is generally sensitive and gentle as compared to the non-Native firm, energetic grasp.

Family

The extended family has a central importance to traditional clients. It is the extended family that cared for them when they were young and taught them to survive. It is useful for a counsellor to include the perspectives of the extended family by asking how the various family members would see the client's problem, or by even inviting some of them to participate in some sessions. Attneave* (1985) tells of a psychiatric resident who complained, "Every time I want to talk about his mother, he starts in telling me about this aunt. I never encountered such resistance to therapy!" (p. 139). Note that the article by Halfe* (1993) is dedicated to her "grandfathers and grandmothers, the elders, ... and all my relations."

The human family is a complex mixture of biological and cultural patterns. While the maternal function has been generally considered as a biological function of the family, the paternal function carries with it a large quantity of cultural material. It is important to note that these cultural aspects are transmitted through a process of identification, where behavior and behavior patterns are acquired without conscious effort. That is to say, the family is a combination of history, culture, and biological factors which Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst, called the family complex (Felman, 1987). This complex is understood to be the basis of the inherited psychological identification that is passed from parent to child. This in turn interacts with the sexual identification, i.e., where the child acquires the sexual-cultural behavior of the parent of the same sex.

> But some other objective traits: the organizational modes of the familial authority, the laws of its transmission, the concepts of progeny, and of parenthood which are linked with it, the laws of inheritance and succession which combine with it and finally its intimate links with the laws of marriage – these are entangled with psychological relationships and thus obscure them (Lacan, 1966, p. ??).

Healthy Functioning

Healthy functioning can be represented by a medicine wheel showing four aspects, physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual in a complete balance. Healthy functioning involves balancing all the aspects and resolving the conflicting ones.

Successfully Living in Both Worlds

According to acculturation theory (Born, 1970; Berry, 1997), coming into contact with a majority culture will result in acculturative or assimilation stress. Individuals under these conditions must end up choosing between several mutually exclusive strategies in dealing with the majority culture. Rudmin (2003) has given a full critique of this theory.

The assumption that there is a link between stress and assimilation is not necessarily supported by research (Sam & Oppendal, 2002; Rudmin, 2003). Research has shown that some people live easily in both worlds. These bicultural people provide an important link to mainstream culture. According to Peavy (1995), "Bicultural personhood is hard to come by" (p. 6). Yet the research of Kurtness* (1991) shows that biculturalism is attainable for some and it can provide an important bridge between integration and differentiation.

The argument in Berry's acculturation research that people are either traditional or assimilated is at odds with the trend towards worldwide cultural exchange. We see all around us examples of bicultural people. It is not an option for everyone. In First Nations, the elders or community leaders often tend to be bicultural people. On the other hand, people can chose to be traditional and have as little to do with the majority culture as they wish. At the other extreme, they can, in a free country, choose to be completely assimilated. The deaf community provides examples similar to these two coping strategies. For the deaf, the first strategy is referred to as being a separatist, living only in the deaf community and having as little as possible to do with hearing people. The second strategy is called passing.

There are major pressures from the dominant society to lose the heritage. Thus to be bicultural, it is often essential for some people to regain traditional learnings. As Native cultures value collective and individual learning, it is necessary to work at both community identity as well as individual identity. Joe Hill*, an educator from the Six Nations Mohawk, stated, "If you teach an Indian who he is, he will decide for himself where he is going" (personal communication, October 1969).

A sense of humour is certainly a sign of healthy functioning. Non-Natives need to keep in mind that First Nations humour is referentially different from their own. We can speak with some knowledge about Algonquian, Iroquoian, Dene and Siouxan humour. The other Nations may very well have a sense of humour that is different yet. Below is a joke from **You're so Fat: Exploring Ojibwe Discourse**, by Roger Spielmann (1998). Often if you tell this kind of joke in a group, the non-Natives will look puzzled or even be offended and the Native people will break up in laughter.

There is a nasty fur trader known for his temper and suspected of dishonesty. When he weighed people's furs, he would always lay his hand on the scales, pointing out that his hand weighed exactly one pound. One day a young trapper comes in, and when the fur trader lays his hand on the scale, the trapper pulls out his own weights that he bought in town, and announces that he would prefer to use them. The fur trader flies into a terrible rage and pulls out his gun on the trapper. The trapper shoots him dead on the spot. Afterwards, they cut off the trader's hand. They felt pretty bad about the incident. His hand weighed exactly one pound (Speilmann, 1998, p. 107).

Counselling Models

A wide range of counselling models exists. At one end of the spectrum we find typical Euro-centric approaches simply being imposed on First Nations. This model can be seen as unhelpful or even harmful to the individual and eroding cultural integrity from the community (Darou, 1987). The vocational theories that were developed from White Anglo American subject bases are applied intact (Darou, 2000; Kerr*, 2001). The clearest example is the use of intelligence testing in a non-valid and poorly understood environment (Chrisjohn* & Young, 1998; Darou, 1992).

The next level of model would be a supposedly culture-neutral one (Kivel, 1995). This model implies that all clients be treated equally regardless of culture. However, it does not take into account problems such as value conflicts or acculturation.

Another model is professional counselling (or any other professional specialty, for that matter) presented by a skilled and sympathetic non-Native counsellor (e.g. Couture, 1994). This model is an improvement, but considerable research shows that First Nations clients prefer First Nations counsellors where possible (Trimble* & Jumper-Thurman*, 2002). This is particularly important in large urban areas where First Nations are a minority. There, non-Native counsellors can inadvertently cause more harm than good, because their place as a role model interferes with people building their own cultural identity (Pedersen, 1995). Also from a social psychology point of view, even if the counselling helps an individual client, it adds little to the community, and may inadvertently be deleterious. In communities where Native people are the majority however, a non-Native counsellor can be effective and are often sought out by clients. Here they provide local children, say, with the opportunity to interact with a person of a different culture that they would not otherwise meet. Community members have the opportunity to observe and practice skills on White people, an all-important task when any minority group person must deal with the majority group.

Note that although there is an important role for empathy and understanding while working with culturally different clients (Sue and Sue, 1999), we must also note it is not a sufficient condition in the First Nations case. In working with First Nations clients in an urban setting, the non-Native counsellor must undertake the particularly difficult task of establishing a helping relationship while at the same time, attempting to compensate for any harm they may inadvertently do to client identity. This is in fact possible with some care and liaison with cultural resources such as elders, community ceremonies and Aboriginal Friendship Centres.

Relationship to the Dominant Culture

Residential Schools

The relationship between First Nations and non-Native Canadians, particularly the government and the churches, has been extremely difficult. The Canadian residential

school system is perhaps the clearest and most extensively documented example of deep cultural conflict.

Darou's first experience in 1974 of really feeling the emotional horror of residential schools happened when teaching life-skills at a penitentiary in Manitoba. One day, the inmates spent two hours talking about the mind-numbing violence and depersonalization of prison life. At the end, everybody took a deep breath and prepared to get on with life. Then one of the Native men interjected, "Sure, it's awful here in the joint, but at least it's not as bad as residential school. I've NEVER been beaten like I was at residential school."

The original mission of the schools was to Christianize and educate. Millar's (1996) book, Shingwauk's Vision, recounts the effort in the last century that the elders, such as Shingwauk, made to obtain schools so that their children could learn this powerful paper-writing skill that the colonizers were using. The mission later changed to rooting out this dangerous and powerful Native culture.

There was a more satisfying period in the 1970's where the students began to successfully sabotage the system and get their revenge. The James Bay Cree students, Billy Diamond* and Teddy Moses* produced a Cree-language Christmas pageant at Sault Ste. Marie that was so touching it even ran on provincial television. They slipped in critical comments and bawdy stories in the Cree language not understood by the school staff. Both Diamond and Moses later became well-known chiefs.

The last Canadian residential school closed in 1976, ending an era of deprivation and abuse. Although the educators' efforts to assimilate First Nations students into the dominant culture were largely unsuccessful, they did separate children from their families and thereby deprived the communities of generations of shared indigenous knowledge. Such a void will be felt for generations to come. It might be imagined that the school staff were trying to teach the children, but were perhaps misguided in their methods. It is difficult to explain widespread child sexual abuse and perennial violence as misguided methods (Dickason*, 1992; Millar, 1996; Thomas, 2003).

The residential school system bears a striking resemblance with the concentration camp model. During the dictatorship of Franco in Spain (1939-1975), there were schools used to house orphan children and also children of suspected Republican opponents. Their treatment as semi-slave labourers closely shadows that of First Nations. The concentration camp model is intended to strip individuals of their identity, reduce their behavior to automaton level and force submission and obedience to a specific set of oppressive patterns or face extinction. Ruano's (1996) personal experience in the case of Peruvian Indigenous communities and their treatment during counterinsurgency campaigns also shows traits of the concentration camp model of schooling.

It should be noted that the Canadian experience of residential schools was quite different than that of the United States (Lewis, 1928, Parmee, 1968, Thomas, 2003).

Multi-Generational Influences

Freud (1912) saw that society creates mechanisms to ensure social control of human instincts. He speculated that taboos had their genesis in guilt. For Freud, the past is not

something that can be completely outgrown by either the individual or society but rather is something that remains a vital and often disruptive part of existence. The emphasis on the past being alive in the present is a central theme in psychoanalytic approaches to the individual and society. It is the authors' subjective opinion that psychoanalytical approaches have a certain resonance for First Nations peoples perhaps because of the importance placed on symbolism, dreams and the unconscious. First Nations interpretation of the world certainly had resonance for Jung (Von Franz, 1964).

In **Totem and Taboo**, Freud (1912) set out to give an account of taboos and of prohibitions in general. He was guided by the idea that groups only prohibit what individuals really desire. Behind the laws that structure human society, he said, is the horror, and behind the horror is desire and the murderous capacity to act on desire. Freud was fascinated by ancient objects -- as if they were witnesses to humanity's deepest impulses covered over by thousands of years of the civilizing process. The presence of these objects seemed to speak to him of the distant, yet still active, past. In **Man and his Symbols**, Jung (1964) continues on a similar vein with concepts such as the collective unconscious, the shadow and animus/anima.

So what has this got to do with the relationship of First Nations people with the dominant culture? There is a form of depression in First Nations that does not appear to respond to treatment. The origins of the deep and persistent depression seem to be associated with colonialization, the cultural genocide that accompanied it, the loss of the country, and the major loss of lives that occurred during the epidemics of measles and small pox. This is passed on from generation to generation in the form of identification that takes place between parent and child. Furthermore, we could speculate that the unbridled aggression First Nations faced at the hands of the land-grabbing colonizers could be traced back to their unresolved trauma from the period where they dealt with the great plagues of Europe. To state this in another way, the colonizers' genocide may have been used to inflict their own trauma and loss from the plagues they knew in Europe onto the First Nations People as a form of displacement.

Common Presenting Concerns in the Counselling Context

Educational Stress

Going South to get advanced education in a college or university is a particularly stressing event in the life of a northern First Nations youth. It can be very unpleasant to go and live in a big city full of non-Natives, with its bad smells, constant noise and disagreeable food. The attraction of a subway and MacDonald's does not last long. A non-Native counsellor may have difficulty appreciating how stressful it is for a First Nations client to live in a milieu where people have a completely different way of life.

It has been observed that Native students tend to deal with stress by reducing their activity level (**deactivation**). In similar circumstances, non-Native students tend to become hyperactive and talkative (**activation**) (Blue* & Blue*, 1981). A majority of First Nations students, particularly those from traditional communities, tend to withdraw and deactivate

in times of stress. Over periods in the order of three months, this can become chronic. The effect can be seen in a university cafeteria around exam time. The non-Native students are generally agitated and loud. The Native students are sitting silent and frozen in their places.

There appears to be a neurological basis for this particular reaction involving the limbic system and neurotransmitters. According to van der Kolk (1994) writing about post-traumatic stress, the concept of a chronic stress deactivation effect is supported by the fact that low levels of serotonin are found in inescapably shocked rats. In this freeze mode response, the brain releases opioids that interfere with the storage of explicit memory, and incidentally inhibit pain. Traumatized people often report being speechless; this represents a failure of the explicit semantic memory. When stressed, these people act as if they are being traumatized all over again, and regularly revert to irrelevant or even non-adaptive emergency behavior, often becoming partially amnesic.

There are some impressions of the mechanisms that could cause this effect. Van de Kolk notes that norepinephrine affects memory storage in an inverted U function, i.e., high or low levels inhibit memory. The amygdala, which is involved in acquiring conditioned fear responses, may be over-stimulated in people with chronic stress. Its function is to send memories of free-floating signed feelings to the hippocampus (e.g. "I am afraid."). The hippocampus links explicit memory to these feelings (e.g. "I am afraid of the exam."). If the hippocampus in turn is over-stimulated, it inhibits exploratory behavior. There is some suggestion that chronic stress may damage the hippocampus (Steinberg, 2001).

These effects in the case of First Nations people may have some culturally adaptive aspects. The deactivation link with serotonin increases environmental monitoring, surely an advantage for a hunter who must not move for long periods. Also deactivation is linked to pain inhibition; this will be recognized as an obvious benefit to anyone who has lived the bush life.

Drug and Alcohol Addiction

Despite the stereotypes, there is some evidence that addiction rates among First Nations are about the same as those for the majority culture when controlled for socio-economic status and educational level (Beauvais*, Chavez, Oetting, Deffenbacher, & Cornell, 1996). In a survey comparing a large sample of White American adolescents, Hispanic adolescents, and American Indian adolescents, the White Americans exceeded both Hispanic and American Indian youth in the amount of alcohol used.

Philip May (personal communication, April 4, 2002), however, points out that serious problems are caused by a particular drinking style among American First Nations. That is, many American First Nations people do not drink at all, but unlike other cultural groups, the normative style among those who do drink is binge drinking. There is ample evidence to indicate that this is a continent-wide pattern. And among a subset of these binge drinkers there are some very heavy drinkers that greatly elevate the public health consequences through foetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), mortality, crime, familial disruption and general health morbidity (Ptasznik, 2000).

May (1994) points out several other stereotypes. Native people do not metabolize alcohol differently than other groups. He stated: "No basis at all for this myth is found in the scientific literature" (p. 124). There is not a higher prevalence of drinking. Prevalence varies widely; there are in fact more non-drinkers among American First Nations than among most other groups. The problem is destructive drinking styles, not just prevalence. Alcoholism is not just a male problem; although women's addiction rates are lower than men's, their addictions can be just as chronic. FAS is not a Native-specific problem because FAS is an ***equal opportunity birth defect*** (p. 137), but it is a problem in the destruction that it causes to the individual First Nations people who are victims of it. FAS prevention is a promising area for community development because the disease is particularly damaging but preventable.

It is McCormick's* (2000) view that successful alcohol treatment must be based on making connections to meaning, family, spirituality, identity, and particularly a client's culture. For example, the Round Lake Treatment Centre in British Columbia uses the motto, "Culture is treatment." Stubben (1997), after interviewing 500 graduates from treatment centres found that there were four key ingredients to successful treatment: 1) the presence of Native staff, 2) contact with elders that allowed clients to reclaim their identities, 3) aftercare in the community that included traditional healing and ceremonies, and 4) the existence of alternatives to an AA-only philosophy. Stubben found that AA or NA-only programs had a 93% relapse rate, while programs that mixed AA or NA and tribal ceremonies had a 53% relapse rate.

Suicide Prevention and Treatment

Suicide rates among First Nations people are far higher than those for Canadians in general, about 37 versus 13 per 100,000. First Nations youth in Canada are eight times more likely to commit suicide than non-Native males of the same age (McCormick*, 2002). Some of the demographic co-variables for suicide include age (the rates are particularly high for people aged 15 to 24, a group who represents 20% of the population), alcoholism (alcoholism, and not drugs, is involved in over half the successful suicides), and education (people who have not completed high school or are unemployed, have higher rates).

Without understating the seriousness of the issue, again we find, on taking a closer look at the data, that if socio-economic factors are taken into account, the rates are comparable with the rest of Canada (Ross*, 1996). Note, for example, that the highest national suicide rates in the world tend to be in northern countries, and rates tend to be low in equatorial countries. Russia's rate is 41 per 100,000 and Finland's is 27 per 100,000 while Mexico's is 3 per 100,000 and Costa Rica's is 5 per 100,000 (United Nations, 1998).

As a counsellor, it is valuable to know that three internal factors are important in the immediacy of suicide risk. They are loss, a trigger and chemicals. We speak of loss in its broadest sense, that is, the person is truly in the process of mourning. It may be the loss of a loved one, a good friend, or an important aspect of their life. The chemical factor within the brain can be either external (alcohol) or internal (neurotransmitters). People can be high from psychoactive chemicals or may be affected by long-term depression. There also

has to be an immediate trigger. This may be a fight with a boyfriend, or on the other hand, the completion of a lifelong goal.

The demographic factors mentioned earlier are mostly extra-psychic and do not represent psychological problems. There is a tendency for counsellors to attribute intra-psychic causes when in many cases the problems have external sources out of the control of the client. In studying suicide risk, it has regularly been shown that hopelessness, and not suicidal ideation or depression is the greatest predictor of completion (Cull & Gill, 1999). The best overall approach to deal with these is to facilitate societal growth in First Nations so as to remove hopelessness, not to simply provide better counselling to suicidal clients. Ross* (1996) points out that communities that move forward in their development, inevitably show lower rates of suicide.

According to Ross* (1996), there are a number of measures that would potentially decrease the risk of suicide completion among members of First Nations: better management of access to prescription drugs, controlling access to firearms, better access to quality care, effective treatment of alcohol dependence, reducing the reluctance to make use of such care by promoting excellence in our own services, and improving access to basic necessities for good health such as clean water, adequate sewage disposal, education and opportunities for meaningful work.

Quality educational and vocational counselling will allow people to develop important buffers against suicidal risk. Addicted women tend to be depressed. Some psychological treatments have been shown to be more effective than others in treating depression; we need to learn these approaches and adapt them to First Nations cultures. The simple act of practicing and supporting aboriginal spirituality is therapeutic (Blue & Blue, 2001). Thus, we must develop holistic treatments that combine counselling with culturally appropriate healing including social supports and traditional medicine. The recovery and healing of suicidal youth can be facilitated through practices such as connecting with culture and tradition, becoming aware of the responsibility to others, expressing emotions appropriately, establishing future goals and hope, spiritual connection, role modeling, and connecting with nature (McCormick*, 2002).

However crucial it is to build community strength, the counsellor or psychotherapist is not well positioned to help in these efforts. Our role is to deal on a personal level with potential victims, their families and their communities. So are we simply giving **Band-Aid** solutions, or even worse incorrectly placing the responsibility for the problem on the victims when in fact the problem is the consequence of unresolved collective self-image conflicts brought about by colonialization? Ross* (1996) correctly places the focus when she says,

> We must remember that those who attempt or commit suicide are attempting to seek a solution to a problem that is causing intense suffering, a pain that is perceived as intolerable (p. 253).

Multicultural Counselling Process

First Nations Models of Helping versus Euro-American Models

According to Trimble*, Fleming*, Beauvais* and Jumper-Thurman* (1996), non-directive approaches may be ineffective because, "many Indian clients, especially more culturally traditional ones, are likely to be reticent and taciturn during the early stages of counselling, if not throughout the entire course of treatment" (p. 193). The fluidity of the conversation seems to depend on the ability of the counsellor to listen, and not on the client's ability to talk. Some clients treat counsellors with the respect that they normally reserve for elders (i.e. silence, no eye contact). This can be disconcerting to a Euro-centric person using typical contemporary counselling models, and can be confounding for First Nations students in counselling programs.

Counsellors need to develop competencies in hearing nonverbal communication and particularly in dealing with silence. The counsellor's job is really to hear the meaning beyond the words and in the absence of the words. We typically understand silence when it indicates emphasis. We often misunderstand meaning when we toy with concepts inside our heads and reconstruct them to better express an experience or emotion. All things within the counselling session have meaning and demand equal attention.

In the Trimble et al. (1996) study, taped counselling sessions were played to residential school students. The tapes included both Native and non-Native counsellors and three methods, directive, non-directive and a Native culture-based method. The results showed that the Native counsellor was preferred and that non-directive counselling was rated as least effective. The conclusions made from this study are useful: all else being equal, Native counsellors who use some sort of concrete approach are perceived to be the best counsellors by Native clients. The authors concluded that this is why Native people take a dim view of the usual counselling situation.

Appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) is an approach that fits well with a First Nations' model of community action. In this approach coming from the field of organizational development, interveners first use community members to list the strengths available to them. Next the community members set out goals that they wish to achieve. Finally, they collaboratively find ways to use these strengths as tools to progress towards the community's goals. Kerr* (2001) bases her counselling program on principles of using strengths to realize the client's goals. She believes strongly that this is more effective than a medical approach where one tries to heal the deficits and weaknesses of the client or of the community, often leading to blaming and victimization. Approaches that are based on the strengths of the individual and the positive aspect of the community (Chamberlin, 1998) will probably be more helpful for First Nations.

With children, particularly children in a traditional setting, a similar technique is to ask them to tell their favourite trickster story (i.e. Nanabush, Raven, Coyote, etc.). You listen closely, even if you have heard the story many times. Analyzing the themes, subjects, attributes, methods of the subject, and the outcomes can then give you some insight into the problems but also the strengths of the individual. The value of the technique is to avoid

the personification of the problems. It allows you to work collaboratively to develop new ways to attack problems and build solutions.

Although the authors have used a variety of approaches in therapy with children, the best approach often is that approach with which the therapist feels most comfortable considering the presenting problem. Children under the age of adolescence often find talking while drawing or playing with dolls or toys less stressful. Bornstein and Kazdin (1985) describe these techniques in detail in the *Handbook of clinical behavioral therapy with children.*

Tolerance for ambiguity is an important competency for counsellors because Native people tend to structure systems differently. A Native person's home may have objects placed out in a seemingly random pattern. Similarly, clients will pull out information in a way that may appear random and confusing to the counsellor. However, this is more often the lack of the ability of the counsellor than it is the pathology of the client. Our job is to be the one who hears the silence: through the silence, the client is constructing meaning.

> Counsellors must be adaptive and flexible in their personal orientation and use of conventional counselling techniques. Commitment to understanding the cultural context and unique cultural characteristics of clients also is essential. This often requires counsellors to extend their efforts beyond what is typical in a conventional office" (Trimble* et al., 1996, p. 196).

Counsellors need a deep understanding of their own values first before they can become aware of their biases, and then in turn understand the client's values. Because of the great variety of First Nations cultures, this statement applies as much to Native counsellors as non-Native counsellors, working with diverse First Nations clients. To develop a counselling approach that is appropriate to the range of traditional and non-traditional cultures, the counsellor must be flexible, increase self-knowledge, be oneself, avoid theoretical counselling dogma, and, of course, listen, listen, listen.

The role of counsellors as compared to spiritual leaders can be well explained by the medicine wheel. The East-West axis is the axis from intellectual to emotional. It is the domain of the counsellor. The North-South axis is from spiritual to physical, and that is the domain of the elder. The counsellor is thus responsible for dealing with a balance of intellectual and emotional issues such as cognitive approaches to vocational counselling and other practical work. The elder deals with the relation to the spiritual world and to physical illnesses. It is not our intention here to the limit the role of the elder. We are only offering some general guidelines to understanding the function as opposed to prescribing roles or duties.

Trimble* and Jumper-Thurman* (2002) pointed out that counsellors of First Nations people can easily misunderstand their client's behavior because of inter-cultural conflict. They note, "Many clients for example may not recognize the need for professional assistance when community-based helping networks are perceived as far more beneficial" (p. 196). On the other hand, counsellors can become so enchanted by the client's unique way of looking at the world that they fail to deal with the actual problem at hand.

Counsellors need to focus on expressed values rather than preconceived images or notions. This is a key point and it is difficult to overemphasize it.

A similar example of the role of non-Natives is given by the Crees of James Bay, Quebec, who took control of their education system when they concluded the James Bay Agreement in 1974. At that time they began bringing in some non-Native staff. The elders stated that the Whites with whom they had positive interactions, had the following motivations for moving to James Bay: fun, making money, fishing and hunting, and professional opportunity. They did not like people who came to escape, to transmit a philosophy (e.g. missionaries) or for reasons of altruism. It may seem surprising that the elders do not like do-gooders. But the elders have accurately perceived that the altruists regularly have underlying shadow sides of anger and mean-spiritedness. The professionals they did not like came in with a deficit or negative view of Cree society. The professionals they liked came in with an appreciation of the strengths of Cree society: good humour, successful financial management and pristine nature.

Interconnectedness

McCormick's* (1996) research indicates that the successful practice of counselling for First Nations people differs from Euro-American approaches. The aim of healing for First Nations is concerned with attaining and maintaining balance between the four dimensions of the person: intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical. In addition, First Nations healing focuses on interconnectedness rather than autonomy. First Nations people connect with the family, community, culture, nature and spirituality for successful healing. This can be extended to connectedness with other First Nations. Visits to other First Nations help us to gain an understanding of where we are coming from, cultural influences, ways of life and language (Kerr*, 2001).

The theme of interconnectedness is common among most First Nations cultures. It is also important however to consider the individual in the context of the community (Lafromboise*, Trimble* & Mohatt*, 1990). Transcending the ego, bringing about harmony in the community, and completing processes with a community-based cleansing ceremony can be seen as a model for First Nations healing (McCormick*, 1996). Cultural values may be reinforced by such community ceremonies as the sweat lodge, the vision quest, the shaking tent, and the Sundance (Mohatt*, & Eagle Elk, 2000). First Nations clients will tend to turn to community elders for any important personal problems (Blue*, 1977).

Story Telling

Story telling is a traditional way of transmitting healing messages. Elders essentially *own* certain stories and they use them to gently move people to new learning. It is a way of working with which First Nations people are very comfortable, and are generally open to in the counselling setting. It also has the important role of establishing the value of the elders in transmitting key cultural information. Please note that it is important to gain permission to use an elder's stories, and it is important to follow the story as closely as possible. For

an example of the use of stories based generally on the Medicine Wheel, see Storm* (1985).

Joe Eagle Elk* told a story at an international meeting of medicine men and psychoanalysts (personal communication, June 1988). He gave permission to use this story. In the old days, people would go down to the water to wash their clothes. An adult would go first to make sure there was nothing that could harm the people. The people would go as a group. While the adults did the washing, the children would play along the shore. When they left, an elder would stay behind to wipe out the tracks and to call all the children's names. Joe was asked at this point why would you call the names when you know that all the children have left. Joe replied that they called the *spirit* of the child. Nowadays, he reported, no one calls the spirits and the tracks remain, going in all directions. The spirits are lost. Three different analysts/medicine people (Blue*, Mohatt* and Jean-Max Gaudillière) later wrote up the story with their own emphases.

Healing Circles

An important tool in lifting pain and guilt is to use the **healing circle**. Its value can also be seen in less dramatic times when a facilitator wishes to ensure respect, openness and good listening. The healing circle is a round robin with several important rules of operation. A sacred stone or a feather is passed around the circle from right to left. An elder usually starts the process and explains what is going to happen. This role could be filled by a counsellor as a time to set some parameters on what to deal with. This sets the tone for the people that will speak. The holder of the stone can speak and no one must interrupt. Speakers can take as much time as they wish, or simply remain silent, or say nothing and pass on the stone. No one is to make comments or judgments on other speakers' statements, although statements of understanding can be given and further information can be requested. This process allows the freedom to speak and be respected, to have your thoughts and your point of view heard. The process continues, and it goes around and around until the issue is resolved.

The helping circle in prisons is a great intervention that allows inmates to get a chance to actually talk about their experience. Another common use is in treatment centres. In White society, there are great limitations on sharing information due to adherence to rules of confidentiality. In Native society there is often contact and sharing with the entire family who are included in the work that is done within a healing circle.

Ceremonies

Many people have different ways of understanding the effects of the intercultural contact that has affected aboriginal societies. Over the 300 years of contact there have been many changes in both First Nations and the European peoples in North America. These differences have seriously influenced transportation, communication, education, and our spiritual way of life. Few things in our lives have not drastically changed in that period. Louise Halfe* (1993) believes that colonialization has programmed First Nations for self-

destruction. Programmed inferiority implies that "someone else has written the script" (p. 7).

Many of the traditional ceremonies and practices have come to be recognized as beneficial in the treatment of a wide variety of personal and interpersonal issues. Elders in various social service agencies realize the healing of the spiritual self through gifts of the sweat lodge, vision quest, name-giving, Sundance, Medicine Wheel, drumming, singing, dancing, pipe ceremony, storytelling, and sweet grass purification.

Sweet grass or cedar ceremony

Events often begin with a ceremony using sweet grass or cedar or sage (depending on one's culture). This ceremony acts as a point of meditation and concentration before beginning a serious endeavour. A sweet grass holder moves around the circle clockwise with smoking sweet grass. The circle members wash their faces with the smoke to purify their thoughts and ask for the help of the ancestors. Note that this ceremony should not be conducted if one is not comfortable with the role. Among the authors, Blue* does it regularly, whereas Darou is only comfortable doing it in private, and Ruano does not do it all. People will also use sweet grass as a way of purifying a new house, welcoming a baby, or even blessing banal parts of one's life.

A few years ago, the community of Sioux Valley, Manitoba, wanted to make sweet grass more available to the people so they decided to sell it (at cost of course) from the Sioux Valley Craft Shop. The problem here is that the braids of sweet grass are very attractive in their own right. The elders were afraid that tourists would just come and pick some up without understanding the spiritual significance. The elders held a council to discuss the issue and they came up with a very enlightened solution. They agreed to let it be sold, but it would always be stored out of sight behind the cash register. It would only be given to people who specifically asked for it, whether they were White or Native. The elders assumed that if the people knew to ask, then they had legitimate need, and it was the elders' duty to make it available.

Vision Quest

The Vision Quest is a traditional ceremony where a person leaves the community for four days and nights or longer without food to meditate and seek out a guiding vision. After the Quest, elders will help the person understand the vision. Modern expressions of this ceremony may include unstructured meditation in a quiet place without interruption, or even symbolically, psychotherapy.

Sweat Lodge

This is a ceremony to enhance the power to dream and to give a sense of belongingness to a community. There is a substantial level of preparation and a great deal of structure to both the construction of the lodge and the ceremonies. The sweat lodge ceremony is symbolic of purification, rebirth and regaining old ways. The lodge itself is a small structure

where hot rocks are placed and sprinkled with water to increase the sweat-house aspect of the experience. There needs to be a leader and a gate keeper who sits outside and assists by bring the rocks and opening the entrance at the proper times. Traditionally the leader conducts the ceremony by song and prayers while the entrance is closed, and indicates the time when it is opened and when individuals may make their own private prayers.

Drumming

This is a musical way of expressing the search for vision. Most people associate drumming as an expression or musical medium of the Plains people, but drumming occurs in many Native cultures such as the Iroquoian and Inuit. The Iroquoians have a song festival in the spring using a water drum that is tuned by the amount of water inside. The West Coast people also have a song ceremony using a drum made from a hollowed out cedar log.

Sundance

The Sundance is one of the most spiritual of all the rites and ceremonies. It was also illegal according to Canadian law from 1885 until the amendments of the Indian Act in 1957 (INAC, 1999). Because of its sacredness, it is not generally discussed in published works. If you ever have the good fortune to be invited to a Sundance, jump at the opportunity. However, you should make sure you have a guide that will explain the rules and the level of participation you may take; make an extra effort to remain respectful. The Sundance is traditionally done in the spring equinox as a ceremony of thanksgiving. Typically one pledges to present a Sundance for good fortune.

Vocational Counselling

First Nations seem to find vocational counselling valuable despite the fact that some of the basic theoretical foundations do not seem to be particularly valid in First Nations communities (Chevrier*, 1998). Clients may not have the luxury of choosing their own occupation, the collectivism found in communities may not encourage the principle of pay for work, and ambition may be suppressed to reduce conflict in the community (Brant*, 1990). As a result it is important for counsellors to take into account several practical aspects of work with particular groups.

Northern communities tend to be undermanned, i.e. there are not sufficient people to fill the available work. There may be more work than the people can actually do to meet the day-to-day survival needs of the community. (Other communities are in exactly the opposite situation, being time rich and information poor.) As a result in undermanned communities, there is a tendency for a person to fill more than one role. These roles may or may not be paid positions. They might include a standard part-time job, trapping and hunting for food, bush construction and caring for an elder. A counsellor must be respectful and careful not to treat clients who have no paid job as if they are unemployed. In addition the counsellor may be confused when faced with resistance on the part of a client, who in

the counsellor's mind, should be out looking for work. In fact the client may be too busy, particularly in the seemingly slack winter months.

As a part of healthy psychological functioning, many First Nations clients, particularly youth, have vocational aspirations that allow them to contribute to the welfare of their community (Wintrob, 1969). Strong youth tend to have a solid connection with their family and tend to seek work that returns something to the community. If a client holds this value, it is unrealistic of the counsellor to suggest the person take a job in sales, banking, or flower design regardless of what an interest inventory score may indicate. The counsellor needs to be sensitive to the possibility that the client may need to take a profession that allows contact with kin, can fill an unmet community need, or give value back to the community.

Another important consideration has been known for half a century (Hallowell, 1955). For some traditional First Nations clients, social position is not gained from high professional status. Instead social position and self-esteem are based mainly on personal power, global ability, and inner spiritual power. As a result, a client may receive the necessary education to practice a profession but be unable to put it to use (Trimble*& Jumper-Thurman*, 2002). The counsellor must be aware that personal and even spiritual development may be prerequisites before successfully helping a client with a vocational problem.

Values

Although First Nations cultures are diverse, Brant* (1990) points out that most share certain values. These include non-interference, sharing, respect for elders, harmony with the land, and social responsibility. There are special rules about going into a Native person's home. Note that in some matrilineal groups such as the Lakota and the Mohawk, the house is the woman's domain. Typically you simply walk in and sit down. Your role is to wait patiently until she has finished what she is doing and is ready to meet with you. She will bring you tea and she will say that she is glad to see you. When she stops talking, it is your time to talk about what you came for. You are essentially applying the same rules that would apply when people lived in tents. By the way, we would not advise a White person to simply walk in without knocking unless they are deeply embedded in the community. These are not intended as hard rules, but as indications of what to consider regarding proper behavior in a particular situation. First Nations communities adhere to unspoken rules and the first rule is that none of the rules are stated explicitly.

There is however much diversity between First Nations cultures, such that the difference in values between some is larger than the difference between First Nations and Caucasians (Trimble* & Jumper-Thurman*, 2002). According to Trimble* et al (1996), "Indian clients undoubtedly will express values that are inconsistent with, if not disparate from, those of a non-Indian counsellor" (p. 188), or we would add, a First Nations counsellor from a different culture.

The research of Trimble* and Jumper-Thurman* (2002) found that Native people who had a positive self-perception tended to endorse kindness, honesty, self-control,

social skills, social responsibility and reciprocity. They point out that the importance then is to recognize one's own values, stay open to differing values, be able to recognize value conflicts and be able to help clients deal with such conflicts. A White cook at a tourist camp on Lake Mistassini, Quebec, Canada, pointed out that it was not important that the Crees were Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical or traditional. The important characteristic was that they were simply quite religious.

The influence of elders is probably common to all First Nations and acts as a value overriding other values. The importance of this can be seen in the biography of Billy Diamond, the former Grand Chief of the Crees of Quebec. Although he was a successful student who wanted to complete his education, elders pulled him back to his home community because they believed that he was essential to protecting the land from exploitation by Hydro Quebec (MacGregor, 1989).

The Anishinabek Educational Institute in North Bay, Ontario, Canada, is solidly based on seven teachings of the elders as explained in The Mishomis book: The voice of the Ojibway by Eddie Benton-Banai* (1988). These values are: love, respect, wisdom, bravery, honesty, humility and truth. They provide a solid base for both our clients' lives and our own professional behavior as counsellors.

Spirituality is an important component of counselling because virtually all successful services include a spiritual aspect. Some forms of therapy, such as psychosynthesis (Assagioli, 1983) claim that spirituality is a crucial and final step in a successful growth experience. Quoting one of Peavy's (1995) informants,

> We have a special relationship with the land, with ancestors, with our community and with nature. To achieve harmony is sometimes more important than anything else (p. 3).

However, as Butson (1993) and Trimble* and Jumper-Thurman* (2002) point out, recognizing value differences should not be the only concern; the strength and degree of endorsement of values must also be considered.

> Some therapists have made the assumption that all Native people are comfortable with traditional avenues of healing... However, some Native clients have chosen not to follow these ways and may, in fact, reject them outright. Some are more comfortable with various Christian beliefs, Anglo institutions or European ways (Butson, 1993, p. 5).

To quote Jack Mitchell, an employability skills instructor from Regina, Saskatchewan, "Beware of spiritual leaders with business cards" (personal communication, February 1998).

Counselling with Native Women

According to Ross* (1996), counsellors of Native women have some special needs and challenges. She states,

> Aboriginal women constitute a disadvantaged minority in the general population, relative to non-Aboriginal women and even aboriginal men (p. 249).

Women tend to seek formal services less often than others and may put their needs off until they feel assured that others in their extended family have been served. Women also have lower earnings and higher unemployment. As an aside, for these reasons, supporting and promoting Native women's crafts can be an important community intervention in itself.

Malone (2000) points out that women were particularly affected by colonization, residential schools, and an oppressive child welfare system. She recommends learning about the great strengths of these women before embarking on a counselling practice with them. She suggests that counsellor take multicultural training and anti-racism training, that they review their reinforcements for this line of work, and that they consider doing their own therapy with a person from outside their culture. Her counselling methods are based on empowerment and have a focus on social causes. She gives clients permission to feel and express anger directly and effectively.

Traditional healing and holistic approaches appear to be particularly valuable (Ross*, 1996). According to Malone (2000), in many First Nations societies, women are the owners of this information. For the Iroquoian people, herbal medicine was clearly the domain of women, and particularly the clan mothers. According to the research of Viau (2000), they used 152 different medicinal herbs. Even today, some of the best herbalists available are Iroquoian women.

Much of feminist therapy involves **walking the talk**. Malone says clients can be encouraged to be educated and conscientious consumers. For example, they should be encouraged to negotiate the orientation, methods and values of their counselling, and to otherwise take an active part in it. Counsellors for their part need to be proactive and educated about women's issues.

For men helping women, the most important concern in establishing the relationship is acceptance. This has to be done in a very careful way. You cannot do it necessarily in the Euro-American way because this may be perceived as sexual. Verbal following, direct eye contact or pure silence are probably not appropriate; you need to respond with respect and positive acceptance. Virtually every situation can be seen as you rejecting them and not believing them. They expect to be treated as if nothing said is believable, and at some level their problems are their own fault. They need to be constantly treated with unconditional respect and understanding.

Training

Cross-cultural counsellors require a solid initial background in counselling; no amount of practical experience can adequately compensate for the basic psychological

understanding that is acquired in the undergraduate curriculum. The graduate program requires specialized material that explores the sensitivities and cultural behavior patterns of various ethnic and cultural groups to gain the sensitivies to nuances of behaviors displayed within the group. It is necessary to go beyond the simple identification of cultural behavior patterns to recognize the feelings and meanings that they symbolize.

To become effective interveners, much of the learning is done through internships and contacts with Native communities. It is particularly important to observe the issues and problems that exist in these communities in a holistic sense. Problems may vary from family break down to the lack of indoor plumbing. Dealing with the client must be taken in the context of the larger design. It makes little sense to tell students to study in a quiet place if they live in a one-room house. Counsellors need to know their clients and the home environment.

Given that, there is a place for formal education in counselling to some level, because almost all approaches have some value. Essentially, all approaches to counselling and psychotherapy are culturally isomorphic, i.e. they emerge in specific cultural circumstances because they have a level of efficacy. The key is that the method be developed together with the student. The student can learn the advantages and disadvantages of the different techniques. The training must evolve not to adherence to one orientation but to openness to different counselling orientations. It is important that the student develop flexibility and the ability to be open minded.

Helping Native Helpers

Chrisjohn* (1990) believes that First Nations helping professionals face an unusually high risk of burnout. Their workloads tend to be too high because of reduced funding and multi-tasking. They are expected to be experts in their field of study, but also to be guest speakers, volunteers, cultural interpreters and translators and even language teachers. When counsellors have less paper qualifications than others, they may suffer from the classic impostor syndrome, but because of general under-funding, the impostor syndrome itself may become institutionalized. Next there are built-in cultural conflicts. Counsellors feel they are spending a lot of their energy trying to fit clients into systems that are culturally inappropriate.

There are societal pressures on First Nation counsellors to move things by bearing pressure on individuals in their own or other nations. This is not how things are done in First Nations communities. Power is implicit and gained by respect through hard work, time, and by "everybody knowing what it is you can do and cannot do" (p. 207). Prejudice is another issue. "Being an Indian in Canada is a stressful enterprise" (p. 209). First Nations counsellors thus have all the usual stressors of their profession plus a series of additional ones as well.

Chrisjohn suggests several strategies. Change yourself in some ways; this can be empowering. Involve yourself elsewhere, say with a hobby or sport. Change the stress source in some way. Adopting a positive attitude can in fact be done directly as a choice, and you can reinterpret negative energy by positively reframing it. Personal growth can

help you avoid burnout. The growth may be by individual classical therapy or by traditional First Nations methods. When you are involved in a large project, do not take for granted that the early stages will be easy or will even succeed at all. Be cooperative, and get along with one another at work. Similarly use your network and share in it. Try to minimize spill over, i.e. do not let stressors in one area of your life drain energy from the healing, refreshing areas. Avoid burnout by learning about it. Use cognitive- behavioral methods such as thought stopping and removal of cognitive distortions like generalization, emotional thinking or denying the positive. You can also use behavioral methods like time management and assertiveness training.

Synthesis

We forget that the secrets of the culture are unknown to the culture. Lacan said that the greatest discovery that an analyst makes comes when he is fully listening to the patient's experience (see for example, Felman, 1987). This certainly is a rare experience. To effectively listen to First Nations clients, counsellors must do much more than just use active listening or identify patterns of influence. If our clients speak through silence, we must learn through listening.

Concluding Remarks

As can be seen by the number of asterisks in this chapter, the major forces in counselling and psychotherapy with First Nations are First Nations professionals themselves. This fact has changed the power relationships and the focus of research. Research is now being built on partnership, and answers the research questions put forward by the First Nations involved (Boucher, 2002). However, conducting psychological research with First Nations is still a delicate issue, especially if the researcher is White. There is a long history of insensitively conducted research putting stress on communities (Darou, Kurtness* & Hum, 2000). Several recommendations can be made to reduce the chances of conducting disrespectful research:

1. Obtain informed consent and follow the directives of a local advisory group. Do not conduct research unless you have been invited in and you have a clear, relevant purpose;
2. Be patient and flexible. There may be things happening behind the scenes that you are unaware of;
3. When you make gaffs, try to recuperate gracefully. The people are surprisingly forgiving;
4. Learn the culture, geography and language of your community. Read the same documents that local First Nations professionals are expected to read;
5. It is important that researchers put something back into the community. Research often has a high social cost to the community;

6. Consider the use of non-experimental paradigms and be extremely cautious if you use any kind of testing;
7. Share your results with the community;
8. Use a brief questionnaire to judge the influence of your research on subjects;
9. Do not mess around in Native politics.

Research in British Columbia, Canada, has shown that an effective healing program for First Nations would invoke empowerment, cleansing, balance, discipline and belonging. This research could be replicated with other First Nations across the country. An instrument could be developed to measure how non-Native counsellors or professionals develop a working alliance with First Nations. Narratives of First Nations healing stories could be recorded to further develop the concepts involved in First Nations healing (McCormick*, 1995).

Non-Native counselling approaches seldom deal with the spiritual aspects of people. There needs to be a re-examination of the transcendental ways of understanding the world and of communicating this in counselling. The effectiveness of the Vision Quest and of the Sun Dance could be examined (McCormick*, 1996).

Longitudinal studies could be developed to document the effectiveness of career planning models with First Nations clients from the point of view of First Nations people. It would be particularly interesting to determine what facilitated the attainment of career goals (Neumann*, McCormick*, Amundson, & McLean, 2000).

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Questions for Discussion

1. What is your experience in life with Native people? If you are a First Nations counsellor, what is your experience with other indigenous peoples, with White people?

2. Many non-Native counsellors complain that First Nations groups don't talk. What are some roots of this? How do you make them talk (note: this is a trick question)? (We thank a Native inmate at Stony Mountain Penitentiary for this exercise).

3. What do you do when clients don't talk? How do you know when an individual is afraid when they don't say it? Would you be able to be silent for 30 minutes in a counselling session?

4. What do you know of First Nations music? How does it reflect aspects of the culture? Can you give examples of music from the three main groups: traditional, transitional, Euro-western? Identify the type of music from Renae Morriseau, John Kim Bell, Winston Whattnee, Kashtin, Robbie Robertson, Susan Aglukark, Alanis Obosansawin, etc. Make a listing by type and artist, and explain who they are and why they are that way.

5. What are the impacts of the treaty process and the establishment of the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development or the American Bureau of Indian Affairs on contemporary First Nations people?

6. What early traditional songs, prayers, pictographs, and archaeological sites have you encountered? What did they mean, why were they done, how is it different than today?