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# Native American Spirituality and Healing in a Euro-American World

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# Native American Spirituality and Healing in a Euro-American World

By

Carol Johnson, BSW, LSW

MSW Clinical Research Paper

Presented to the Faculty of the  
School of Social Work  
St. Catherine University and the University of St. Thomas  
St. Paul, Minnesota  
In partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Masters of Social Work

Committee Members  
Felicia Sy, PhD., (Chair)  
Carol Hand PHD., MSW  
Harlan Johnson Sergeant of Police in Red Lake

The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present the findings of the study. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

### **Abstract**

This study focuses on Native American spirituality and healing in a Euro-American world. Six interviews were conducted, two each at three different rural tribes in northern Minnesota. The people interviewed were leaders or teachers in local tribes and also elders who are respected in the communities. Some of the common themes that emerged were (a) a change in the communities, viewed as overtaken by drugs and alcohol and feeling unsafe; (b) changes in traditional spirituality; (c) changes in language; (d) honoring true American war heroes; (e) changes in values and views of the ways of living; and (f) the prevalence of humor in the Indian community, which is significant for understanding worldviews and perspectives. An overwhelming response was that all the participants had unquestioning love for their immediate family, extended family, and the whole community. The words and passion spoken clearly by all the elders were about wanting their community to be a better place for future generations, for their grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

### **Acknowledgments**

I am deeply grateful to the participants who have taken time to participate in my study. I have learned so much that has enriched me and will help with the lives of others whom I serve. I am deeply grateful for their time, stories, and patience as I learn and grow personally and professionally. I would also like to thank Dr. Sy for her time and efforts in supporting my topic and research throughout this project. I am also grateful for my committee member Dr. Carol Hand for her words of wisdom and expertise. It was a true honor to meet her. I am also very appreciative of Sgt. Harlan Johnson, whom I admire for his active duty as a police officer protecting our children and families on the streets, working all hours. I greatly appreciate his time, energy, and all his efforts to help me through this process. I also thank Maya Porter for her copyediting.

I am tremendously grateful for the children and families I serve who have inspired me to further my education to better serve them. My thoughts and smiles are with each one of them. They will never know how much I learned from each of them, while being a small piece of their family's life goals. I will never forget their tears, pain, smiles, and the short journeys that we have walked together.

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## Introduction

An estimated 4.1 million people who are classified as Native American and Alaska Native, alone or in combination with one or more other races, live in the United States, about 1.5% of the total population (Broome & Broome, 2007). According to Peacock and Day (2000), more than 30,000 indigenous people live in Minnesota in the cities of Minneapolis, St. Paul, Duluth, and Bemidji. In Minneapolis, the Phillips neighborhood has the largest population of American Indian people in Minnesota. In Bemidji, 17% of the population is American Indians (Peacock & Day, 2000). According to Hadiyanni and Helle (2008), the Ojibwe are the largest indigenous group in Minnesota. There are approximately 200 languages spoken in the 332 federally recognized tribes and 227 Alaska Natives entities. Each tribe is different in beliefs, language, culture, history, and land area (Allison & Vining, 2013).

The rates of poverty, incarceration, high school dropout, suicide, and homicide are continuously rising in this community. Many individuals, families, and communities are affected by changes in traditional beliefs and values in the American Indian way of life. The poverty in Native American communities is a result of historical contributing factors that have produced pain, trauma, poverty, sorrow, and evolving change within the culture, and only limited funding and resources are available to restore a healthy community. These changes tremendously affect Ojibwe people, their community, and the state. According to Hand, Hankes, and House (2012), a network of relationships referred to as a “community of relatedness” is a way the tribal communities incorporate close family and community relationships among members and the environment that have continued for centuries. Byers (2010) discuss the significant role of the elderly in the tribal communities, as it is the elderly people who carry the wisdom and



knowledge of the traditions and culture. It is the older people who participate in the decision-making process in tribal societies.

People learn from others who are older, who share similar situations or stories, or can be looked up to for advice, such as a family member, mentor, parent, or an educator. What happens when the people who are teaching the wisdom or tools for survival are forbidden to practice all the life skills and wisdom they once knew that provided them with health, humility, and supportive environment? What happens when the language they were taught, the parenting skills that were used, the skills for hunting and keeping of the food, the practice of living off the land, and natural ways of healing are taken away through many events that create an unhealthy community? It is this researcher's view that the vital role of elders teaching in the community has changed drastically due to historical events that skewed the ways of living that sustained a healthy family and community.

## **Literature Review**

### **Changes That Affected Native Culture**

**Outlaw spirituality.** In the 1880s, the U.S. government set up courts for Indian offenses. designed to eliminate "heathenish" practices, with the result that Native Americans could not practice their traditional ways of healing. Nearly a century later, in 1978, the government passed the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, which allowed the American Indian people to express, believe, and exercise their traditional ways of healing (Struthers & Eschiti, 2004). According to Hand et al. (2012), tribal people had adapted to Euro-Americans by going underground to practice their traditional ways to keep them alive.

**Boarding schools.** Many of the first Dakota or Ojibwe America Indian children were half-breed children from intermarriages and were educated in their own homes. The Indian

Civilization Act of 1824 was the beginning of formalized school for Indians that was federally funded. Shortly after, the church mission schools that were paid by the government opened in Indian communities throughout Minnesota. By 1838, the federal government was operating 87 boarding schools for Native American students. Dakota and Ojibwe children were being sent to Pipestone, Minnesota; Flandreau, South Dakota; and Carlisle, Pennsylvania; places that were all off-reservation and far from the children's families (Peacock & Day, 2000).

In 1871, the Carlisle Indian Industrial School was established. It was a boarding school where Native American children were forbidden to speak their native language or practice their traditional spirituality. There were reports of physical and sexual abuse in the boarding schools, and the teachers of the school were very punitive to the children (Byers, 2010).

Cross (2006) reports that in an attempt to "civilize" the American Indian people, thousands of Indian children were sent forcibly to boarding schools to assimilate them into English language and Christianity. The children were allowed very little contact with their families, if any (Cross, 2006). Children who were sent to the boarding schools had to cut their hair, wear European clothing, adopt English names, speak English, and be baptized as Christians, losing their traditional cultural identity (Hadjiyanni & Helle, 2008).

**Child welfare.** A U.S. Congressional report in the 1970s stated that 25% to 35% of Native American children were removed from their homes and placed in foster or adoptive homes. Of the Native American children removed from their homes, 85% were placed in non-Indian homes or institutions (Byers, 2010).

In 1978 the U.S. Congress passed a law to stop the child welfare practices by which Indian children were taken from homes, families, and communities. Indian children were losing

their cultural identity while the tribes were losing their next generation of tribal members to carry on those traditions (Cross, 2006).

In 2005, Hand reported that in 1976, 18% of Minnesota Ojibwe children under the age of 21 had been removed from their homes. Of those 18%, 13% were placed in permanent adoptive homes in which they often remained away from their families for many years. As a consequence of the trauma, many of these children were left emotionally, intellectually, and socially lost. Along with the trauma these children lost a sense of belonging that they have tried to recapture their entire lives (Hand, 2005).

The parents, the tribe, and families, with help from expert witnesses and social service agencies, had their rights established with the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (ICWA) (Cross, 2006). The parents' rights under the ICWA included examination of case records, 10-day notices of court proceedings, 20-day continuances, and a court-appointed attorney. The tribe's rights under the ICWA included exclusive jurisdiction over any Indian children who lived on the reservation, 10-day notification of court proceedings, a request for child welfare cases to be heard in a tribal court, intervention of state courts, and the ability to change placement preferences. The social service agencies had to provide families with services that were rehabilitative in nature, focused on preventing the breakup of the family before removal or reunifying the family before parental rights were terminated (Cross, 2006).

**Massacres.** There were many different fights or wars among tribes and Euro-Americans throughout history. One massacre that is well known in Minnesota is the Mankato hanging. Abraham Lincoln was the president in August 1862 when the United States was in violation of treaties that were not being followed and many Native American people were starving. The Dakota people started attacking settlers who were on their lands, killing 44 of them. The Dakota

warriors were fighting with the military until Henry Sibley held 1,700 elders, women, and children hostage. The United States wanted to summarily try 400 Dakota for murder. Sibley's court determined that 300 men were guilty and asked permission from President Lincoln to execute them. On December 6, 1862, Lincoln approved the mass hanging of 39 men. Mankato built a large scaffold in the middle of town and on the day after Christmas the United States government hanged 38 Sioux men, letting one go (Byrd, 2013). The descendants of these Native Americans still feel the effects of this traumatic event today.

**Loss of land.** In the years from 1826–1871 there were 16 treaties, agreements that were used to take Ojibwe land. The Dawes Act of 1887 divided the American Indian land into small plots and assigned ownership to individual American Indians. The land that was previously owned by the American Indian people for centuries was split up, parceled out, and a large portion sold to non-Indian people (Peacock & Day, 2000).

The Red Lake band lost millions of acres of land, but the tribal leaders in 1889 did not sign or agree with the Dawes allotment Act of 1887 so their land was not parceled out to individual families, which preserved a sense of community and helped preserve the Ojibwe language. The Red Lake Nation is still a sovereign nation today in which the tribe makes all decisions pertaining to Red Lake. It is a closed nation, run by the 11 tribal council members who govern the band (Indian Affairs Council, 2007–2012).

The Dawes act of 1887 abolished reservations and divided the land into individual allotments to make tribal members landowners of their own piece of land. The parceling of the land was assumed to be the best way to make the Native Americans conform to the White people's way of life by farming the land and producing crops (Cross, 2006).

There are seven Ojibwe tribes in Minnesota: Grand Portage, Bois Forte, Red Lake, White Earth, Leech Lake, Fond du Lac, and Mille Lacs. The Ojibwe reservations were established as follows, with population and approximate acres of land: Grand Portage in 1854 with 56,000 acres and a population of 500. Bois Forte was established in 1866 with 42,000 acres and a population of 500. In Red Lake the treaty was signed in 1863 with 637,000 acres of land with a population of 5,400. In White Earth, the treaty was signed in 1867 with 67,000 acres with 4,500 people in the community. In 1855, Leech Lake was established with 29,600 with a population of 4,700. Fond du Lac was established in 1854 with 24,000 acres of land and 1,100 people. Mille Lacs was established in 1837 with 10,500 acres and 1,300 people (Peacock & Day, 2000).

**The removal period.** Through the period from 1830–1800, the reservations were deemed to be of very little value to the United States government, which opened the country to westward expansion. The American Indians had been forced to relocate to a new environment where they did not have the knowledge or skills for adaptation (Cross, 2006). During this time there were numerous massacres, wars, diseases, and removals of Native American people that cost the lives of thousands of them.

An executive removal in 1850 was a forced removal of Ojibwe from Wisconsin to Michigan to Minnesota. As a result, 350 Ojibwe people died due to resistance from the native leaders. In 1854, a treaty created reservations in Minnesota and Wisconsin for Ojibwe people. In the 1860s through the 1870s, the Ojibwe people relocated to the reservations. In the 1870s to the 1880s, the land allotment policy was enacted to force American Indian people to assimilate into the individual farming tracts (Norrsgard, 2009).

In 1934 the Reorganization Act required tribes to govern themselves. More than 100 tribes had their political status with the United States government terminated. The tribes that did not want to adopt this system were no longer recognized as tribes (Cross, 2006).

### **Loss of Healthy Community**

**Racial profiling and violence.** Perry (2006) conducted interviews of 278 American Indian people, exploring the devastating effects of crime on the reservation and how people are treated while on and off the reservation. The interviews discussed violent and nonviolent hate crimes. Racial violence is part of the norm in Native American communities. Many of the participants told stories of being disrespected by name calling; some individuals were deliberately singled out and assaulted, and many youths described their situations as being humiliated, singled out, or assaulted for doing nothing but walking with friends in a group and later being charged with gang affiliation. Many of the participants thought that law enforcement did not take violent deaths or victimizations seriously, as there was no investigation. Many other participants talked about the inventing of stories to get pulled over and charged with something. One participant talked about what you do when the person doing the harm is the person that you are supposed to call for help. One participant disclosed that Indian people do not trust the White system, as it always favors the White person, favor and it is a losing battle for the Native American from the start (Perry, 2006).

**Education.** According to Allison and Vining (2013), Native Americans have the highest dropout rate of any minority group, with only 55.8% graduating from high school. Approximately 87% of these children attend public schools. Only 7.7% of Native Americans graduate from college with a degree. In the 1997–1998 school year, 19.42% of Native American children received special education services. Native American elementary and secondary special

education is leading with the highest proportion of children, 10.76%, who have learning and speech impairments. Native American children are born with disabilities three times more often than any other racial group in the United States, and 85% of all disabilities in Native American people are preventable (Allison & Vining, 2013).

Because of the high number of dropouts and children with disabilities, parents wanted something more for their children and started their own schools. Peacock and Day (2000) discussed the Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig School; located in the Town of Cass Lake on the Leach Lake tribal community, it is the largest tribal school. Other Indian parents in urban areas in Minnesota started the Heart of Earth Survival School in Minneapolis and the Red School House in St. Paul. There is also a school in Mille Lacs called Nay ah Shing School and in Fond Du Lac there are the Fond du Lac Ojibwe School and the Little Black Bear School, which are all based on a solid tribal curriculum (Peacock & Day, 2000).

**Suicide and violent crimes.** According to EchoHawk (1997), Native American youths between the ages of 15 and 24 are three to four times more likely than any other ethnic group to commit suicide. Immediate and ongoing professional counseling is important during these years, but there is a limited availability of services that can respond in culturally sensitive and appropriate ways (EchoHawk, 1997). Native Americans in Minnesota have substantially higher rates of premature death and violent injury than those of non-Indians. Suicide rates among 18–19-year-old male Native American youths are six times higher than any other demographic groups in the state (Hadjiyanni & Helle, 2008).

On March 21, 2005, Red Lake Indian Reservation, located 120 miles south of the Canadian border, had one of the largest school shootings that left 10 people dead and 14 wounded by a 16-year-old student. The student shot his grandfather and the grandfather's

companion before going to the Red Lake School and fatally shooting a Red Lake school security officer, a teacher, and five students before he took his own life (Littlefield, Reiersen, Cowden, Stowman, & Long Feather, 2009). This incident is just one of the numerous traumas that Native Americans have faced throughout history have many lingering effects that have forever changed their community and nation, such as fetal alcohol syndrome, homicide, suicide, educational dropout, family violence, and many others.

### **Native American Ways of Healing and Spirituality**

**Guiding principles.** There are some basic guiding principles in Native American culture that guide one's life in the way of the circle that is passed on through generations from the elderly to the youth to maintain harmony, balance, and good medicine. Following are just a few:

1. Give thanks to the creator in the four directions: Mother Earth, Father Sky, and for all relations within, or around you.
2. Everything has a purpose and all things are interconnected.
3. Provide giveaways to others when your family has all their needs met.
4. Seek harmony and balance in all things by practicing silence and patience, and by using inner calm, self-control, dignity, and endurance.
5. Give something for everything that is received, always ask permission, and give thanks to everything that is living.
6. Do not stare at others; treat everyone with respect. Dropping your eyes is a sign of respect to elders, teachers, and community leaders.
7. Take care of the earth like your mother: Protect her, honor her, deeply respect her, and give to her.
8. Listen with your heart and to the guidance that is offered by prayer, dreams, wise elders, and friends. (Portman & Garrett, 2006)

**Storytelling.** Families tell their children and grandchildren stories about their life to pass on family secrets, traditions, and ways of doing things. Native American storytellers shared tribal wisdom through their medicine stories that taught people how to live in harmony. It was through these stories that cultural traditions were kept going. They learned the history of the family and community, acts of courage and bravery, and most importantly, the life lessons for individuals to find themselves through their ancestor's stories that were carried down through the generations



(Struthers & Eschitit, 2004). Minorities defend their culture by telling stories to reduce the trauma from within to form a future of racial tolerance and diversity (Cutter, 2011).

According to Gross (2009), everyone at some point in his or her life is a teacher and a learner, from children, to dreamers, skilled hunters, visionaries, interpreters, and ethno historians. Traditional education is practical, lifelong, and integrated into the fabric of the community as it has life and spirit that are interconnected in the universe (Broome & Broome, 2007).

Many American Indians still use traditional healers to maintain their overall mental, physical, and spiritual health. American Indians communicate by telling stories to describe or explain things. They believe that respect is shown by avoiding direct eye contact and by providing physical space. They want to be spoken to with a calm voice that is easy to understand. They believe that spiritual health is interconnected with physical health. In American Indian culture, the healer's level of spirituality is significant for how effective the healer will be. In this holistic approach it is believed by American Indians that the earth, sky, the creator, and all things are interconnected.

**Humor.** Most people generally like to laugh, tell jokes, and tell stories that make others laugh too. According to Garrett, Garrett, Torress-Rivera, Wilbur, and Roberts-Wilbur (2005), people may have a stereotyped idea that Native Americans do not like to laugh, but humor is viewed as a way to survive. It's kind of a dry, insane sense of humor that sometimes is easier than crying. Anytime you laugh about something, it shatters it so it does not have power over you.

Native humor takes many different forms, including stories, anecdotes, teasing or razzing, songs, dance, art forms, cultural symbols, and so forth. Probably one of the most common forms that Native humor has traditionally taken is that of stories intended to

both entertain and educate. Many tribal oral traditions emphasize important life lessons through the subtle humor expressed in the stories. (Garrett et al., 2005)

**Powwow.** A powwow is a social and sacred gathering of American Indian people. A powwow consists of a circular arena for drumming, dancing, and singing. Some Native Americans wear regalia that are created by themselves or given to them that have a meaning or purpose. At many powwows there are booths that sell traditional and newer crafts, artwork, musical instruments, and food (Ryback & Decker-Fitts, 2009).

A drum in Native American ceremonies is sacred, as it represents the entire world. The beat of the drum represents the heartbeat of the world. Most powwows in traditional Native American ways consist of drumming and dance, while healing ceremonies consist of drumming and singing. The traditional songs are sacred for a particular event as each has its own meaning. There are always new songs created for new and old circumstances. Some traditional Native Americans believe that being part of a powwow with singing and dancing provides a connection with the past, present, and future. Some believe that dancing in a powwow means joining with one's ancestors who have previously passed away (Ryback & Decker-Fitts, 2009).

**Ceremony.** A sun dance ceremony lasts over 3 days, when participants may be treated by medicine men for illness, receive visions, and offer prayers to others. They may go without food and water, drying up to help one other. A flute melody, a bird song, is offered as a gift to the Great One for sound and healing (Portman & Garrett, 2006).

A blessing is a very simple and powerful way to restore harmony and balance among a community, nation, individual, family, and clan, through singing and chants, usually in the morning prayers and songs (Portman & Garrett, 2006).

The number 4 represents the spirit in each direction: East, South, West, and North. The person doing the ceremony gives thanks to the four directions for wisdom, strength, clarity, and guidance. A circle symbolizes power, relationships, peace, and unity as it serves a sacred relationship with all living things flowing in the circle of life by living in harmony and balance (Portman & Garrett, 2006).

**Smudging.** Burning cedar, sage, or sweet grass over traditional Native Americans and passing the smoke provides purification and healing. The natural plants of cedar and sage are known to banish negative energies, and sweet grass attracts positive energies. Smudging is a part of a sacred ceremony used to prepare for healing and further spiritual experience (Ryback & Decker-Fitts, 2009).

A smudging ceremony or “Clearing the Way” is a very powerful cleansing spirit smoke that is created from burning herbs. Smokings use a doctored tobacco that has a specific healing purpose. It is believed that good and bad medicine can be passed from individual to individual if they walk through the smoke. According to Hadjiyanni and Helle (2008), eagle feathers are used daily for spiritual purification by wafting the smoke of burning sage and sweet grass that is burning in the shell to ward off evil spirits and negativity.

**The sweat lodge.** According to Ryback and Decker-Fitts (2009), a sweat lodge is a dome-shaped frame built out of willow branches tied together big enough for a few adults to sit around a small pit of heated stones as another method of purification. The frame of willows is covered with blankets and tarps with only a small opening at the top. A sweat lodge leader will guide the ceremony while the fire keeper builds and maintains the fire. There are 28 rocks that are heated with seven stones brought in through each of the doors. Sage, sweet grass, and cedar

are brought into the sweat lodge and burned on the 28 rocks, releasing a hot steam that fills the lodge (Ryback & Decker-Fitts, 2009).

A sweat lodge ceremony can be considered a rebirthing experience as it provides a purification or fresh start of life. The ceremony honors transformation and healing by embracing the natural power of the universal circle. Participants may use a sweat lodge ceremony to mend a broken circle that could result from neglect from traditional ways that can result in disease, as mind, body, and spirit are interconnected (Portman & Garrett, 2006).

**Visions.** Traditional Native Americans are continuously seeking a vision through dreams, particular signs, animal messengers, ceremony, or other ways in which an individual understands his or her path in life, moving in the rhythm of the sacred heartbeat. It is important to stay on the path with your vision as your vision is an inner knowledge of your own medicine through the spirit helpers (Portman & Garrett, 2006).

**Herbs.** Traditional Native Americans used plants in their environment as part of healing along with the spiritual connection. Herbs were used to bring back balance with their emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and physical well-being. It was not only the herbs that did the healing, but the combination of the herbs and the spiritual connection the herbs had with the healer (Ryback & Decker-Fitts, 2009).

**The pipe.** The pipe ceremony has been passed down through the generations as an instrument of prayer that interconnects humans and nature. The preparation of the pipe ceremony includes the bowl and stem that represent earth and sky, and each pinch of tobacco and herbs that are placed in the bowl represents the human link with the natural world. When American Indian people inhale the smoke from the pipe during the ceremony, they are embracing the sacred communion. The sacred communion consists of numerous sacred ceremonies, such as rites of

passage, purification, renewal, or strength, and maintaining and restoring the people's connections with the circle of life (Morris, 1996).

The pipe bowl is made of red catlinite and the stem of hardwood. In the traditional ceremony, the pipe and the stem are usually kept separate until the ceremony begins. The tobacco is a combination of red willow and sage herbs and is meant to carry the prayers to the creator. During the pipe ceremony, the participants will stand or sit in a circle passing the pipe to one another, smoking and praying (Rybak & Decker-Fitts, 2009).

The pipe ceremony is a healing ceremony to connect physical and spiritual worlds by melding the prayers of the person into the smoke. As the smoke moves it integrates the prayers with the spiritual and physical worlds in the four directions as a healing practice (Portman & Garrett, 2006).

One day after the Red Lake school shooting, people gathered in Bemidji for a prayer circle. The elders burned sage, smoked ceremonial pipes, offered prayers, and told stories. The pipe used during the ceremony was a healing, uniting tool that represented universal truths. The tobacco in the pipe was a direct link to the creator. The traditional prayers to the four directions were a way to ask the ancestors for help while the offerings were made on a buffalo hide. During the ceremony an eagle appeared flying over the crowd as a spiritual icon carrying the messages back to the other world (Littlefield et al., 2009).

**The medicine wheel.** Rybak and Decker-Fitts (2008) discuss the purpose of the medicine wheel as it signifies a circle that is endless, holy, and a nation's hoop. The enclosed circle forms a cross with four spokes on the wheel, each spoke turning a different direction. The East is the color red, which means rising sun with spirituality. The South is connected to daylight and nature with the color yellow. The West is the direction of the setting sun, the physical aspects of life,

and the color is black. The North is the direction of the cold winter winds that are associated with the cognitive aspects of life with the color white (Ryback & Decker-Fitts, 2008).

### **Integration of Healthy Community and Western Medicine**

Western medicine is highly mechanistic, focusing on the scientific model to heal and cure diseases in the physical body. Some Native American views of medicine and healing are based on cultural traditions, rituals, and myths from their own beliefs and customs within the culture. The different views on healing may cause humiliation, disrespect, and embarrassment to Native American people (Struthers & Eschiti, 2004).

It is important for professionals who work with Native American people to know that for them, traditional medicine and healers play a vital role in healing. An effective way for professionals to provide culturally competent care to Native American people is to include the holistic view of the mind, intellect, body, and spirit. The professional providing the service becomes part of a traditional healing process by being a part of the healing circle (Broome & Broome, 2007).

When Western medical doctors are educated in the traditional healing ways of the Native American people and value those traditions as an integral part of the healing process, the patients recover their wholeness faster (Butterfield, 1991).

Throughout history the U.S. government has tried to help the Indians by removal, termination, and relocation. Butterfield (1991) states that the only way to truly help Indians is to strengthen them in their culture by using traditional ways.

According to Struthers, Eschiti, and Patchell (2008), using indigenous ways of healing is a holistic and natural approach in which culture is a vital part. Western medicine's approach is mechanistic and fragmented. It is important for Western doctors to include herbology, energy

medicine, counseling, and ceremonies as part of the healing process of Native Americans' overall mind, body, and spiritual well-being. It is also important for doctors not only to incorporate these medicines, but also to respect the years of experience of a traditional healer with his or her expertise in herbology, energy medicine, counseling, and ceremony.

### **Restoring Culture**

According to Loewer (2003), the Ojibwe people are in the process of cultural restoration. Traditionally, Ojibwe people passed on their cultural traditions orally to encourage the individual's spiritual, intellectual, physical, and emotional growth from one generation to the next. One way to restore some of the cultural ways in an informal setting is by home-based schooling, when the parents teach their children. Another way is one-on-one transmission through mentoring activities, passing on traditional skills by sharing knowledge in arts, crafts, hunting, fishing, and medicine. Another way is the interactive talking circle, a small group where people can share and process healing in traditional ways. A more formal way of learning traditional ways is by attending conferences or workshops, attending traditional institutions, and attending some of the community cultural events like powwows, community feasts, and art shows (Loewer, 2003).

Hadijiyamni and Helle (2008) state that the four factors that have kept Ojibwe culture from completely disappearing are family and kinship relationships, language, spirituality, and the ethos of respect. According to EchoHawk (1997), indigenous people who seek mental health services must be able to tell their story and express their trauma from historical events, alienation, and poor sense of identity.

According to Nebelkopf et al. (2011), the U.S. government mandates that health care providers use evidence-based practice to maintain their funding. A gathering of Native

Americans (GONA) was an evidence-based practice to reduce and prevent alcohol and other drug abuse within Indian communities in the early 1990s by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. Updated in 1998 by the Indian Health Service and Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, GONA focused on Native American values, traditions, and spirituality in healing from historical trauma, and included cultural activities and talking circles that were not approved and received limiting funding. In the mid-2000s, the Indian Life Skills Development, a classroom setting with an emphasis on suicide prevention, was a holistic approach in culturally and community-based programs that were provided in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. It was an evidence-based practice that was submitted to the National Registry of Effective Programs and Practices. A methodology that is evidence based and culturally sensitive to American Indians must include relationships, elders, participant satisfaction, and cultural knowledge (Nebelkopf et al., 2011). The purpose of this study was to learn and explore how the loss of culture affects the healing process within our Native American community.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This qualitative study provides a better understanding of some of the traumatic events that occurred for Native American people in northern rural Minnesota. It provides an understanding of the traditional ways some Native Americans have coped through generations of traumatic events and their healing process and how this has affected people in the community. The main purpose of this study was to understand specifically the traditional healing practices of Native Americans and the changes to their cultural traditions through time, to provide a better understanding of the roots of the problems that many rural Native Americans face, such as changes in the environment, loss of cultural traditions, changing livelihoods, child raising



methods, and extreme poverty. This qualitative study sought to answer the question of what are some traditional Native American ways of healing, the causes of the loss of those ways, and the effects of those losses.

### **Conceptual Framework**

All individuals have their personal stories that have made them who they are and how they view the world. This researcher understands that everything that has happened to people on a personal or professional level will mold or affect their worldviews. It is important to understand how those views correlate with their relationships, spirituality, traditions, beliefs, and customs that are changing throughout time. This study examined and helped understand some of the traditional personal or professional journeys that some Native Americans have gone through to shape their worldviews within their culture.

Narrative Theory and the Reminiscent Theory are tools that were used to gather information from a personal perspective from the interviewees. Using these theories allowed the researcher to gather the story from the interviewee's perspective that will broaden our understanding of the effect on important aspects of Native American culture.

This paper presents a North American Aboriginal worldview as a comprehensive and spiritual approach to life. It explains the nature of this approach to health and healing and demonstrates the relevance of such an approach for various cultures in today's world.

### **Personal Lens**

This researcher has had 7 years of professional employment as a Licensed Social Worker and more than 10 years of volunteering and other employment opportunities with families that endure extreme poverty, as the teen parent program coordinator of MFIP; a mental health practitioner for youths that were in foster care awarded custody of the state; a wish granter for

Make A Wish; a homeless advocate in Beltrami County; a volunteer at Boys and Girls Club; and chairperson of the Bi-County CAP program. These years of experience have brought me significant awareness of the struggles of Native American youths and families in my community who daily face extreme poverty and all the barriers to the means of survival. It is the stories and experiences of the youths and families that I serve that have brought me to wanting to learn about traditional ways of healing, their loss, and culturally sensitive ways to serve traditional people and the system.

My perspective comes from a journey of finding where I may belong, in finding my purpose and mission in life, personally and professionally. I grew up in a very small community with only Caucasian people who were either farmers or working in a small-town factory. All of my grandparents except my maternal grandfather passed on before I was born or a few months after. My father also passed when I was in my mid-twenties. I learned that my maternal grandmother was Indian. The rich values that are instilled in me today are from learning how to live off the land; care for my neighbors, children, and elders; and care for the water and soil. That is how we ate and drank to survive, working from sunup to sundown, caring for younger children, sewing, baking, and cooking for the men in the home. In our recreation time I learned how to hunt, fish, garden, gather berries to bake desserts or jam, sew blankets and clothes, and care for farm animals. I remember when I shot my first deer; my father and I cut it up and gave it away to the local community members and provided a feast.

I started school at Northland Community and Technical College for my associate degree and numerous classes in mechanics. I worked at 7 Clans Casino for a few years, meeting many wonderful people who shared similar stories. I graduated from community college and had to move away to further my education. I moved with my son to a very impoverished community in

Beltrami County in Minnesota. I always wanted to be a helping professional who could help ease the pain and sorrow in the eyes of the children and families. I have always known as a young child this unheard pain from other children. It is something a person never forgets. I knew that my primary interest was to protect children, listen to their stories, advocate for them, and educate others on rural life, child abuse, neglect, and domestic violence. The purpose of this study was to learn and explore how traditional culture and the loss or changes of culture affect the healing process for our youths.

### **Method**

I conducted a phenomenological, qualitative research study with interviews of six people, consisting of older adults who are American Indian in rural northern Minnesota. I wanted to hear the personal stories of these people to learn their cultural traditions, beliefs, and the changes that have occurred in their lifetime with the traditions and healing process. I conducted the interviews with the people in their own environment or a place where the participant felt the most comfortable to gain a deeper understanding of how they live with their family and how this shapes the community they share. I interviewed people who were enrolled members and live or work within the American Indian community.

This qualitative study allowed a personal and professional look at their perspective of cultural ways of healing and loss or change within that culture. I was approved to offer only a \$10 gift card to each participant for showing appreciation and giving thanks for sharing their story and time. In Native American culture a person must give to receive. I would have given tobacco, as this shows culturally sensitive and appropriate respect to the participants, but it was viewed as unethical by the Institutional Review Board at St. Thomas. This was explained to each participant before the interview was conducted.

Throughout school and practice we have been taught a set of social work standards that provide the guidelines of ethics for social workers to protect and serve clients. According to the University of St. Thomas and St. Catherine University,

A basic moral test of any community or society is the way in which the most vulnerable members are faring. In a society characterized by deepening divisions between rich and poor, the needs of those most at risk should be considered a priority. Social workers advocate for living conditions conducive to the fulfillment of basic human needs and to promote social, economic, political, and cultural values and institutions that are compatible with the realization of social justice. Social workers pursue change with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups to: address poverty, unemployment, discrimination and other forms of social injustice; expand choice and opportunity; and promote social justice. (University of St. Thomas, 2006)

### **Research Design**

This qualitative research project was a case study to understand the lived experience of some American Indians and their personal and professional stories about healing in their community. According to Connelly (2010), a phenomenological method of research focuses on the conscious experience of someone's judgments, emotions, and perceptions. Phenomenology focuses on the participants' reactions and experiences through the life they live. The interpretive phenomenologist perspective is that the researcher is aware of her or his feelings and the possible effects on the study (Connelly, 2010).

Wertz (2005) described phenomenology research as a psychological research based on philosophy. Phenomenology is more hospitable, accepting, and receptive in its reflection on "the things themselves" and in its care not to impose order on its subject matter. Phenomenology does not form theories, operationalize variables, deduce or test hypotheses, or use probabilistic

calculations to establish confidence as do positivist and neo-positivist approaches; it is genuinely descriptive. Phenomenology holds that psychological reality—its meanings and subjective processes—can be faithfully discovered. Psychological realities need not be constructed; they have essential features that can be intuited and described by the research scientist.

“Interpretation” may be used, and may be called for, in order to contextually grasp parts within larger wholes, as long as it remains descriptively grounded. Although phenomenology can provide culturally critical and emancipatory knowledge, it is not ideologically driven and does not subordinate its grasp of human experience to any ideology; phenomenology dwells with and openly respects individuals’ own points of view and honors the multi-perceptivity found in the life-world. Those whose work brings them close to people’s naturally occurring struggles and triumphs, such as counseling psychologists, require high-fidelity knowledge of people that maximally respects the experience and situational contexts of those they serve (Wertz, 2005).

The interviews were with Native American older adults who are enrolled in a rural tribe in Minnesota. They included a couple of professionals who work within a tribal community and a few tribal members. I gained in-depth information on the personal and professional culturally traditional ways of healing and the loss of culture and ways of living.

### **Sampling**

The participants in this phenomenology study were elderly Native American adults who are personally or professionally living or working on one of the reservations. Upon IRB approval, I informally asked around in public areas for people who are Native American, enrolled tribal members, who either worked on the reservation or lived on the reservation to participate in this study. I hoped to gain more personal or professional participants to enhance a broader understanding of the changes of culture, healing, and healthy community.

The researcher provided a consent form that included information pertaining to confidentiality, information about the study, and benefits and risks of the study. The interviews were held at the private homes of the participants or in an office setting. Prior to the interview, a verbal consent form and confidentiality procedures were audio taped if the participant felt that was culturally acceptable to them. Because of distrust from a history of signing treaty documents and their betrayal for Native Americans, I was aware that many people may not want to be audio taped. I had a list of questions that were previously approved by the IRB of the University of St. Thomas. I asked additional questions or clarifying questions as needed during the interviews and carried a journal to add and maintain notes throughout the project.

### **Protection of Human Subjects**

A proposal from this researcher was submitted and approved by the master's of social work clinical research committee at University of St. Thomas and St. Catherine University to protect the human participants. The University of St. Thomas committees approved the proposal and sent the resulting information to the Institution Review Board. The board reviewed the researcher's procedures for the study to ensure that the participants' rights and confidentiality were protected.

The consent form signed by the participants authorized their voluntary permission to participate in this study. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed to understand the data. The audio tapes will be kept confidential in a secure setting and will be discarded appropriately after the research project is finished. The participants in this study gave a verbal consent on the audio tape.

### **Data Collection**

The data were collected from the interviews within a 3-month time span. The researcher posed the questions to the personal and professional Native American people to gain their personal story of their culture and traditions living or working on a northern reservation in Minnesota. The interview questions were consistent throughout all interviews. The questions were open ended to understand their story of growing up: their cultural traditions, their healing process, what has changed throughout time, and what created those changes (see Appendix A). All the data are stored on an audio recorder or on a tablet that are kept in a locked box. The information on the computer or in a personal phone is kept confidential by locked pass codes and names are not listed on anything. The participant and all the information pertaining to this study was kept confidential by not using names, locking all the devices with pass codes, and putting the information into a locked cabinet.

### **Data Analysis**

After each interview the researcher transcribed the audiotapes, which held all confidential information in the interviews. The researcher used content analysis using similar patterns and themes to interpret the data obtained. The researcher went through the transcriptions and compared the themes with the research that was found that related to the research question.

### **Findings**

The purpose of this study was to learn about traditional ways of healing and cultural values from elders to better meet the needs of our children and families that this researcher serves professionally. A total of six interviews were completed, analyzed, and coded to identify emerging themes. The findings identified many spiritual and cultural traditions that are important to children and families to succeed in cultivating a culture to enrich the community. The findings

also pointed out many significant losses or changes that are affecting our communities, children, and future generations.

### **Demographic Characteristics**

All 6 participants were from northern Minnesota rural tribes. The researcher intended to get 8 to 10 individuals, which turned out to be three married couples. A husband and wife couple was interviewed in three of the surrounding tribes. All the participants were 60 years old or older. Each participant was an enrolled member of one of the tribal communities and lived in that community. Two of the 6 participants were retired but played vital roles in their community. All of the participants have worked in helping professions that help, guide, and mentor others in the community to a life of enrichment.

### **Observational Data**

There is one noteworthy observation about the interview process. Some of the most significant information was learned from the participants when the audio recorder was not turned on. Because of the high level of respect for the participants, the researcher did not take notes and has not included any information that was not on the tapes.

This is an important piece of understanding Native American culture—it is personal and private, so many people feel uncomfortable with audio tape. Every participant was kind and generous, laughing often and appearing very sincere and honest in helping this researcher gather a little understanding of their culture, beliefs, spirituality, traditions, and values of their worldview and community. Most of the interviews were done in the participants' homes, and two interviews were conducted in a local private office setting.

This researcher was concerned about participants being open, but in fact the volunteers were overwhelmingly willing to share their experiences and stories. Another important piece is



that many of the elders spoke words or phrases in Ojibwe that this researcher did not understand so those words were not used, but the meanings were explained on the audio tapes.

### **Healing**

Each participant had different views of healing. In fact, every participant asked for more details defining what I meant by healing. Among the participants, healing was viewed in multiple ways that are traditional to Native American people and was found in all my research. One participant felt that he does gatherings with family, but processes things independently as he does not want to burden or hurt others more by talking about his thoughts and feelings: “We always just try to keep our kids happy.” Another participant talks about her father being a medicine man so that she grew up hearing and seeing the herbs in nature to heal along with traditional ceremonies. She stated, “The biggest part to healing is healing your mind: mentally, emotionally, and spiritually as everything is interconnected.” She said that even if she is physically in pain but in a good mood, her physical pain does not bother her as much as it is interconnected. At powwows there are healing dances for different people that help a person spiritually and also help a person physically. This participant talked about remembering some of the natural herbal ways, but not knowing the medicines anymore.

Two participants found healing in humor, not taking life so seriously, having fun, and helping others, as she stated, “You can’t be serious and survive.” These participants feel that “thinking about other people’s feelings, trying not to hurt them, think of ways of saying or doing things so they do not take it in a bad way so it doesn’t bother them” is also an important contributing factor to maintain humility. Another participant views healing as repairing the spirit through traditional ways: ceremonies, visions, tobacco, talking to other medicine men, sweat lodge, pipe ceremony, fasting, dreams, tent shaking, healing the body, respecting Mother Earth

and Spirit together to seek balance. This participant stated, “Healing of the spirit from things that happened many many years ago, to a month ago, last week, or however long means healing fixing or repairing the spirit, as Native Americans or *annishanabee* people we go through different ceremonies to heal our spirit.” This participant shared his personal story of finding his way of healing that may be significant to others who feel lost or broken inside, not knowing which way to turn.

I met a traditional spiritual medicine man there and he taught me the basics of our medicine, especially tobacco. I had to hurt physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually from a lot of things until I reached a point where I could give up the old life and seek spiritual and emotional healing from even long ago as a child. I use the tobacco, put it out, offer it, and pray with it that it would help him heal from a lot of things; historical things, being raised without any knowledge of our cultural ways of doing things. I wasn't taught how to heal or how we got it. I did not know who I was, where I came from, didn't know the language, I didn't know cultural, spiritual, or religious ways of doing things.

When I learned to ask for help with tobacco it led me to a place to know who I was or what I could do to help myself heal from that entire trauma that went on from growing up and from the wars. The only way I started to heal was on the path of our traditional ways. The spirits put me on this path with different spiritual men and medicine men that showed me the way of healing. I participated in ceremony, sweat lodge, I was given a pipe to carry around, I was taken into the big lodge, and I went on my fast because out there we get to know ourselves and get direction from the spirits and things to come into our life and lead us in a good

way. I also traveled with medicine men. One of the strongest ways of healing in our way is shaking tent, where a lot of spiritual men and medicine men go and get their ok to use different medicines. The medicines that heal our body because you can't get any healing without first healing the spirit and then the body together. We have to have that balance. This is how I live now, it brings balance. When we are experiencing trouble we seek out our tobacco and it heals us from whatever during the day and week, but it is what does and it means that we heal from those things.

One participant feels a part of healing is everyone gathering or pulling together to help one another during hard times, to help one another out.

The people have to heal to quit the drugs and alcohol and go back to traditional ways and teach the children the language, spirituality, community, and the respect for each other and the elders. They believe they should raise the children in the community sharing the knowledge with family, neighbors, and the whole community working together to revitalize who they are, what they are, whom they came from, and learn their family history and ways of living.

### **Differences Among Healing Practices in the Community**

All of the participants discussed many different traditional ways of healing among their tribal communities, as a lot of research describes. All the participants also discussed the concern that many members of the tribe do not practice traditional ways of healing, or some individuals or families practice some ways, but not all. Some of the older participants talked about how many individuals or families attend church as that is how they were raised as for a century traditional ways were outlawed and for many others reasons, such as from lingering historical

trauma. Three of six participants said that only a few people practice traditional ways and it is always the same people that attend the ceremonies and everyone knows who they are.

One participant said,

In a lot of our communities there is only a small group that practice our traditional ways part time. They don't live that way, the traditional way of giving, taking, and sharing. They will ask for it now, our community is divided in a way that we do things that they want as they ask for things for healing. A lot of people do at the last moment when someone is in the hospital to seek a medicine man and then it is too late. The course has been set and we can't change a lot of things like that. If we would have caught the illness earlier we could have. Illnesses that can be cured by our medicine are like liver problems and some forms of cancer can be cured by our traditional medicine, but they don't come until it's too late and that is why they say it doesn't work. When you go the doctor and you take medicine for a cold and it gets better ours is the same way, but you go to ceremony by itself when they come and ask for help. The problems are because people don't know who to approach to ask for help, they don't know the different plants, the different medicines out there, they don't, and they can't identify them because they were not raised in the woods anymore. The people now are more urbanized. A lot of our medicines are used in raw form and they are stronger than the ones they can get from a pharmacy.

### **Changes in Healing Ways and Healthy Community**

All of the elders said that the communities are filled with drugs, alcohol, and violence within the reservations. Participant 1 felt that a healthy community is without drugs, violence, and stealing.

A safe community where you can leave your doors unlocked, cars unlocked, and we could go anywhere and nobody would bother you. We went to a powwow in Lakory in Canada where you have to get there by boat. You can see it from the mainland, but the reserve is alcohol free, drug free, people leave their doors unlocked, open car, and nobody does anything wrong. It is just amazing. That is the only reservation that I have heard of that is drug, alcohol, and violence free. I couldn't believe it. Everyone got along and no gangs.

One participant shared a story about his journey to finding his way to healing as he stated,

They showed us as we passed what we had to do, they came in our dreams and that is a way of healing. I had to heal from all of the past in one big lump. One way they showed me that I was tested in our ways that I will tell you about as this is why I walk this way now. I am going to tell you about things that are done in our traditional way that I have been taught that I have been asking for help and shown ways of healing that has been going on inside me. I had a dream.

The dream that came to me was I was walking in the woods; there was a trail, a path that was amongst the birch trees which are healing medicines for us. The opening in that trail and in those trails that I could see up above, the sky up there was an eagle flying around up there. As he flew there were two eagle feathers that fell to the ground. One I noticed, I look down and saw me in my dream one with diamonds, jewelry, shiny different things on it, rich. The other was just a plain old feather that fell on there so in my dream I reached down and the feather that I picked up was the plain old one with nothing on it, just a regular feather. That was my way of saying that all the riches; I don't need in my life. I need this traditional way; learning the language at times, learning the

basic tobacco, going to sweat lodge, going to my fast, and we weren't taught these growing up, these are healing, they never told us how to do that. Like I say doing these things I also was in my travels they took me to different spiritual medicine men. Each one gave me a way of doing things that taught me a way of spiritual healing during ceremonies. Now you can do those things, you know how, you are healing from them.

All of the elder participants discussed many stories of loss or changes of traditional ways and how its effects have a devastating impact on the community with lack of parenting skills teaching the children the wrong way of life, not providing children with the language, and essential tools of survival in healing in traditional ways that hinder who they are, what they are, and where they came from. If the parents do not know their traditional ways, how are the children to learn their traditional ways of healing the spirit to remain balanced in the chaotic lives of living in unsafe situations with gangs, alcohol, drugs, and violence? Participant 5 stated,

Spiritual medicine men will give you medicine that will work in conjunction with the medicine from the pharmacy. They work better together as it's interconnected and they all come from Mother Earth. The only difference with medicine is that when you go the hospital it comes in prepared form and our traditional way you have to pick it, fix it yourself, and it's all individualized that way for you. It is not measured out, it is given to you a different way and you are told to use it in a different way. The healing that we get is a lot of spiritual healing where you have to heal the body and the spirit at the same time. A lot of time they go to the hospital and they get their medicine to heal their body, but they forget about the spirit so they have to go someplace to get that so it comes back into balance. When your body is in balance you will not have as much illness.

It is well known in today's society that large amounts of children are going to bed hungry, school shootings have risen, gangs and violence are on the rise, child abuse and neglect are consistently underreported and only severe cases are handled, many children all over the world are dropping out of school, and younger teens are getting pregnant that once before.

One participant talked about a tribe that got tired of the hurt and pain from alcoholism destroying their community: "Another place in Canada that the whole group was just drunk and everyone used alcohol. There were only two people that did not drink on that reservation and they took it upon themselves and sobered up the whole community by 90%. They took with what they did to that community and started to do that to other communities near the state side. They would just cry talking about it."

### **Changes Within Family and Community**

**Changes in parenting.** The main themes that emerged with all of the participants were the loss or change in language and the spiritual and traditional ways of life. The women discussed ways that had changed in parenting their children in the community. Participant 1 said,

If children do not get taught or disciplined at home or if parents are not at home to do the teaching, guiding, discipline teachings the children will not learn them at home. It is a vicious cycle. If parents do not teach their children this way they will not learn parenting skills because you learn them at home from how you were raised. The cycle just keeps going and going until someone learns to be a good parent in teaching their children discipline, what's right and wrong, and all the other things that parents do. Especially now days as a lot of children do not have a positive role model at home to teach them these things and it starts a vicious cycle again.

Two of the three women discussed how the whole community raised their children and their whole family, including grandma, grandpa, nieces, nephews, and cousins, were very active in the children's upbringing. Participant 1 stated,

We try and put the kids at ease. I try and teach patience and give advice to the kids. They all get that awful look from me when they are doing something wrong as that is the way it was a long time ago when I was growing up. The way the old teaching was birth to 7 years of age they were taught. When they were born they were put into a cradle board when they can be set up where they can see everybody and that is how they learned from observation, by listening and by hearing their voices. They used all their senses and they got to recognize everyone's voices. They got to know what they were doing when they grew older. They were taught like their parents and grandparents.

In 7 years to 12 years they were taught how to do their work, hunting and fishing for the guys. The men also learned to provide and protect the women and children and their needs. Then they would go further into the extended family where they would learn from aunts and uncles and that was the beginning of their social of getting along with others outside of the immediate family. Then they would get into the community with the elders to learn their roles. The sense of the whole community raising the children has changed. Women participants talked about parents having to be home with their children to teach them through parenting how to be parents when they grow up. The women elders felt that children need to learn some parenting skills in school as a lot of them are not getting them at home and the cycle continues as a lot of children do not have a positive role model.



One of the women said,

Nowadays we don't have large family gathers like we used to and you don't dare to say something to someone else's child or you will be hollered at by their parents. Everybody had their part in teaching our kids. They would let me know if they did something wrong by that look. Everyone knew you just give them that look and the children would know they did something wrong. If the kid did something wrong they would have a chance to confess and if they didn't you would hear directly from the person that seen them doing something wrong. That is the way it was and nobody said anything if it was a community member corrected them cause they had it coming and that they did something wrong that they stopped them from doing anything more. Children were being raised by the whole community. Now days you can't even say anything to so another kid if they are doing something wrong as the family would come back and attack you.

Some of the participants felt that the respect for one another and the elders is gone. The parents need to teach their children the ways through respecting them and teaching them discipline. One participant talked about the importance of having a mother and a father in the home as it provides the children with knowing who they are, who their grandparents are, which gives them identity and security. One participant said,

Today there are too many multiple mothers and fathers in a home, with a lot of single parents and multiple partners, as that is not how they were raised. The creator gave us one life, one person, and one mate that we stay with through sickness and health and you don't see this much today. So we need to teach the children a lot of morals and

values that are deeply engrained in our language and culture that will bring back a healthy community.

All of the participants' parents and grandparents spoke traditional Ojibwe language fluently, and 2 of the 6 participants speak the traditional language. Some of the participants said that they can understand the language more than they can speak it.

Some of the significant changes came to communities as the world evolved with electricity and indoor plumbing, stoves, and houses and how they were built. Participant 2 disclosed that "Back in the days we did not have refrigerators or anything like that so we used to have wells in different spots and put our butter and meat down in the loft." Participant 1 discussed her mom being very stern on cleanliness. She talked about how she had to wash her hands to do anything, especially handling of the food. "We had a floor that just had lumber boards on it and we had to scrub them and if we missed a piece or had a streak in them she would know and we would have to do them again. We would have to do that every morning before we could play."

Along with the world evolving with housing, indoor plumbing, electricity, telephones, bathrooms, stoves for heating the home and cooking, so did the government aid, as one participant disclosed,

They did not have the welfare program either. The kind of welfare they did have was people had a food order and a family would get \$25 worth of food (staples) and they had to work for that. Nowadays kids don't have that as they get to stay home and draw a couple hundred some dollars plus they get food stamps. I had asked some of these people why and they said it don't pay for them to go to work now because they have children and the state is going to take it all anyways so you are better off to stay home. That is just

hurting the whole community as it just carries on from one person to the next now. It's generational now.

Another significant point was how racism has changed and in some ways is better for Native American people. One elder participant talked about how he went to school and the racism towards him was awful, but in his eyes it has gotten better over the years.

When I grew up here we did not have any prejudice like other places. We were the minority in school and there were a lot of racial problems there as we were the minority in school then, Indian people here were. It has changed now, they call it diversity and that makes a difference. Now you see a lot of Indian and Non-Indian intermarrying and having kids now. Before, it was never like that as you were a minority. The larger group would always pick on the smaller group. The first time I went into the service we took a bus to Fargo. That was the first time I ever seen those signs "no blacks allowed, whites only." It is hard to imagine now how it used to be like that. I used to talk to people around here that have never encountered that, they did not know that was going on. We did not have the radio or television then for communication so we never knew. If someone had died from the reservation that was related to us we probably didn't know until about a year later. Now if something happens we hear about it within an hour. The only negative thing that has changed is the people's work ethic around here.

All of the elders revealed sadness about the communities being as unsafe, as they are filled with drugs, alcohol, and violence. One elder stated,

We feel unsafe around here with all the thieving going on too. People have been thieving so they can get their money to get their drugs. You don't know who is going to be next or what is going to happen. There also has been a loss of work because people get

drug tested and they fail it. Drug testing is required no matter where you work. They will go clean until they get it and get hired and then will work for a couple months and all of the sudden a random drug test comes up and they fail it. They can't pass them as a lot of them are into the drugs.

Another participant stated,

I was raised in a community where my parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents did everything with us. We would always have big family gatherings. We always stayed at each other's houses. There were times that my aunt would watch me when I was a baby and nurse me just like she nursed my cousin. My family now still sees a lot of one another we just don't have the big gatherings like we used to. It was really good growing up. I have been on my own since I was 16. If something happens to someone or someone is sick the whole family gathers and we all pull together. When I lost my dad the nieces, nephews, grandchildren, grandmother and everyone was in the hospital. It was full. It was the same thing for my nephew when he passed. The hospital in Minneapolis said they have never seen nothing like that before. When I was growing up my family was very close. Anytime there was a need of any kind the family would pull together to help them out. It provides so much support and a person just knowing.

The majority of the elders talked about the how the work ethic has dropped dramatically in their communities. One elder described how it was when she was a child:

When I was young both my parents worked. As soon as the kids were old enough and in school my mom went to work and there were six of us. My dad was always working in the woods. I remember the kids use to peel one tree a day and we would each get a quarter and that was a lot of money in those days. They could not afford a babysitter

so they would just bring us with them. When my parents did need babysitters we were split up between my grandmother, aunts, and uncles. We always had new clothes and shoes for school that is one thing that we always had. Once we were old enough we had to pick potatoes or go ricing to earn our money for school supplies. If we worked we got to pick out our own.

Nowadays parents just give to their kids. This welfare, we did not have that. That's self-respect. If people had more self-respect things would not be this way. We don't have that self-respect around here. I can see here three generations of families that are on the welfare all their lives. Now their kids are getting it and it's so sad. It changes culture and it is the constant spending. Now days the kids are having kids and they just don't take care of them and they give them to grandma or grandpa to take care of them so the elders are raising babies now. It is part of Native culture that the grandparents raise the children, but now days I think it is getting taking advantage of. My parents taught us that you absolutely had to raise your children unless you couldn't and they would gladly step in. I have a family member where the elders are taking care of the kids and the daughter gets the big check for them and it puts a lot of strain on the elders. They are very abusive to their parents and it's awful. They get the staples for the kids, but that is about it.

One participant stated,

The losses that had happened many, many years ago have been taken away from us and told not to practice. When we were told not to use them, we lost a lot of our healing ways, medicine, and spiritual healing from that as they all worked together. In our way of life we do not get an instant fix, we have to work for them. We have to put out and go to the

ceremonies to get the healing to heal the spirit. Only in ceremonies the medicine will come and they will tell you what to take, how much to use, which to use, where to get it, who to see, and whatever else. One of the biggest changes is that the community is so divided. We all talk within our own little group about how to get out there and share it, but we are put down. I do not understand as we were taught our knowledge from our elders and others in Canada that is still living this way. There are those people out there that don't get it and become instant spiritual men and those people bring danger within our community.

The change has to take place within people in our communities that have practiced the traditional way of life, and we know who those people are. People that we see we talk, we share, how to heal our communities we need to bring them all up to get better starting with our children showing them, visiting with them, and helping them. A lot of community members are seeking others out to make sure they get their Indian name which is spiritual and helps them along the way. The spiritual guide helps them in their ways and helps them. If they take tobacco to someone and ask for that you will get healing as that gives them identity to who they are and their children are suffered from identity of who they are. A lot of children don't know the Indian songs, but you tell them to sing something to you and they will rap one out and that identity's who they are. You have to go to powwows, ceremonies, learn personally who you are, and a lot of this will follow and come to you. If you don't go you don't change. A lot of people don't know the basic stuff. We need to share this knowledge whenever we get up and talk somewhere we give a little bit as we ourselves don't know a whole lot until we give tobacco then we can share that knowledge.

Some elders were concerned about how the child welfare system is and how it pertains to children getting removed from homes, as the children are what creates a community. Through a century of numerous of traumatic events within Native American homes and communities it is no surprise. One elder stated,

When I think of family, I also think of neighbors and community too. We talked about the changes of taking care of one another and helping one another. The discipline has changed and a person does not dare to correct another's child. Even the changes within the home, if a child gets hurts now a days they can call that child abuse. My kids were always getting hurt from playing and I worry about the child protection workers and my grandchildren.

Two of the elders talked about the world being so fast paced and stressful and how the stress plays vital roles in the community and each individual and family. "The world is so fast paced and stressful I worry about people. People can become overwhelmed with stress and I see danger in guns." Participant 2 said, "There are leaders here and others that work high up in the ladders then end up committing suicide. Just like the school shooting it is dangerous with guns and the fast pace of everything. I know others that are younger in age that has committed suicide too."

The elders are consistently trying to talk to younger people about opening up and talking to others and getting help to work through frustrations in healthy ways as suicide does not affect only that one person, it affects the family, neighbors, and the whole community. One elder told how she tries to talk with younger people and others that if they ever think of suicide, that if things are that hard, they should talk with someone about it:

Getting someone to talk about it, talking about it gets it out of our system. When you are talking about it then the person just listening it doesn't seem so bad when you are getting it off your chest. When you listen to others and their problems things might not seem as bad then. Don't ever think that you are the only one with a problem. Also I try to get them to think about what it would do to their family. The grief and loss of what you are doing to your family, your kids, and your mother, all of your family.

**Identity.** A person throughout life will wonder who they are, what they are, where they belong, and what they want to do with their life. Parents begin to mold their children into who they are with particular ceremonies or religious activities, daycare setting, kind of clothes, language in the home, the type of home the family lives in, urban or rural, language spoken in the home, type of food eaten, and the list goes on. Teenagers then begin to form their own identity of who they are going to be when they become an adult from the very first roots of when they were a child from their parents and family that contributed in raising them. As teenagers starting picking out their own clothes, friends, classes in school, employment, and future endeavors we as adults consistently do self-identity checks to see if we want to change anything, move, further education, change employment and if we are happy with where we are currently at right now. Our identity starting out as a child is the foundation of how we will be as a confused teenager starting our way or as an adult always wanting to better things in our lives and the people around us.

One elder participant stated, "As I talk with people we talk about how many people know the history of where they grew up, their great-great-grandparents, and nobody knows. That is a problem; those youths won't know their history and so lose a sense of belonging. People do not



know family systems or any of that stuff. If we don't start teaching them we are going to end up with cousins marrying cousins."

Another participant said,

Our blood line is thinning out from way back as we are losing our full-blood Indians. We are getting down to  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{8}$ ,  $\frac{1}{16}$ , we are losing as a nation of people and pretty soon we will only be descended of someone. In this course we lose our identity, ways of living that were given to us by the creator as we lose a lot of that self-belonging. Who, what, and if you don't know where you are and where you are at in life or how to do things, if you are not shown, you are not taught. Again, that affects the children as they don't know how to do it and who they are.

### **Kinds of Changes**

All of the elders discussed multiple changes that have occurred from the way that they were raised as a child to now being an elder in the community. One participant discussed her personal thoughts as she remembers that many people may not even think about or process how many lingering effects one change can be.

...."paper genocides" that got rid of a lot of Indians when they first started making a lot of birth certificates or Social Security cards under race as it was White or Black or maybe Hispanic but they never had anything for Indian. So when they registered any newborns they would have to check White. So when a person got older and they wanted a copy of their certificate to prove that they were a particular degree of Indian blood it was on the birth certificate that they were Caucasian. So I tell everyone that whenever you have to fill out a form if it

asks Native American or whatever just put your tribe down so they are counted in statistics too. I always put Chippewa Indian or Red Lake band.

Some of the elders discussed their frustration at the loss of land that once belonged to the tribe and has been sold or parceled out. The elders talked about talking with others to try to buy the land back, but there is such a deep anger that is coming from the current property owners. The elder talked with sadness, explaining that people carry such hatred toward members and they did nothing wrong.

One member talked about the loss of use of herbal use of medicine that was once practiced as a norm that now is unfamiliar or lost to younger generations. Some medicine men or women are learning this today or researching it, but it is changing as it was not passed on from traditional people and this changes culture and ways of doing things. One participant stated,

My grandparents and my parents, my dad was considered a spiritual leader and they knew all these herbs and herbal plants and everything that they were used for healing. I remember them using a pitch for burns and cuts, making ointments for colds rubbing it on our chests. Well, nowadays the people that learn this stuff that know all these plants they call themselves medicine men. It is not something you can just pick up and learn as you go along. I lot of the younger people adopt different ways from different tribes. The people see something done in a different tribes and culture over there and all of the sudden they want to bring that here and that tradition are not traditional in our culture in our own tribe. So it varies from place to place and community to community, and family to family, but you always see other families taking some of the others things and bringing it back. Everything in our tribe should be all as one, but it is not.

All the elders discussed sadness, frustration, or disappointment when they talked about how the lack of respect for elders in the community has changed. One elder stated,

My dad always taught us that I want you to listen to this and learn this. I want you to learn how to live with the new ways too. You are taking some of the old and bringing in some of the new. Now we have new people and they do try to use some of the old ways but they disrespect the way that they use it. The tobacco and like the spiritual fires now and stuff. When a person passes on that is the one thing that was brought into our thing now from the Sioux culture now that is why I said it changes. Instead of taking a sprinkle of tobacco to help you on your way, they just take the cigarette butt from sitting around there and they will just throw it in. Just a lot of younger people and another had her spiritual fire right where she burns her garbage so a lot of that stuff has been lost. The respect has been lost. A lot of the younger ones don't know they are being disrespectful, but when you try and tell them they don't listen either. They don't listen to their elders, and they are disrespectful towards their elders. The younger ones have not been taught how to respect so they don't even respect themselves.

Two of the six elders talked about the significant changes in traditional ceremonies from historical events, but also from the younger generation traveling to other tribal ceremonies and bringing those traditions back to their own communities, which changes those particular tribes' ceremonies, traditions, and culture and creates confusion and disrespect. One participant stated,

Some of the changes that are taking place you see a lot at the ceremonies as each community is different and how they do ceremonies, such as, powwows are different as they are brought to them in different ways. A lot of people that practice in a traditional

way bring culture from another community and mix them and everyone gets confused. This, again, changes everything and how others view things and it affects our community. People are told that this is not right, that this is wrong, so our people are getting confused by some many of our people traveling to other states. Different bands practice their ways and they bring them back to a lot of our ceremonies, songs are meant for that band in that particular community and our way is meant for our community. We do share them, accept them, and respect them for what they do and how they do it.

If you practice our traditional ways here it is specific to our area. If you go to Red Lake or another community then you practice strictly their traditional ways because they have held on more traditions as a lot of their elders have passed on the knowledge. If you go to White Earth they have a mix of ceremonies between traditional and western ways. A lot of our traditional ways and spiritual ways are passed down orally and nothing is written down. It is all orally passed as that is how we do things. That is the only way the communities and families and people and children can learn is by going to the ceremonies. If they don't go they don't learn anything. Most of the children will go to a movie or a dance, but do not participate in a powwow or sit at a drum and listen, but those songs that they are singing and what they mean, how they say it, and where they come from. There is true meaning behind all of those things and how they view that drum and take care of the drum is all part of our way of life and is healing to our people. It is a big circle that we live in as it is all interconnected, everything that we do. Healing, talking, visiting, and sharing and sometimes we don't even know why we do things until later we realize the meaning and that is why it was brought to our circle.

### **Changes in Language**

All the elders' participants discussed how all of their parents and grandparents spoke fluent Ojibwe and that is how they were raised. One participant said,

When I grew up with my grandma and grandpa all that they spoke was Indian and at that time I don't think that any of the older people spoke English, and if they did it was broken English. One word in Indian is something they have seen it as it more describing. I can't speak Indian, but I can understand it. I can speak really well, but I am not fluent or anything. There are very few people that can speak the language now. That was something of the past, but I am very happy to see they are bringing it back to the younger generations.

One participant felt that the change of language may be linked to the loss of time with the whole family as she stated,

There has been a big change in language because my kids don't even know it. They know some of the basics, some regular phrases, but that's it. Years ago families were tighter knit and close compared to today's families, now you don't see that. Just a couple decades ago the kids used to go to their grandmothers a lot or they came to our house and we went to their house. We played with all the kids. All the aunts and uncles came over and we would get to see them more often. Everyone would visit everyone. Now days you don't have time to visit, hardly enough time to call on the phone. The world is just fast paced and there is just no time now.

Two of the six participants disclosed that they can speak Ojibwe pretty well, but they are not fluent. All the elders talked of deep concern as their children or younger generations do not know the language, except maybe common phrases.

Some of the changes that are taking place you see a lot at the ceremonies as each community is different and how they do ceremonies, such as powwows are different as they are brought to them in different ways. A lot of people that practice in a traditional way bring culture from another community and mix them and everyone gets confused. This, again, changes everything and how others view things and it affects our community. People are told that this is not right, that this is wrong, so our people are getting confused by some many of our people traveling to other states.

One participant's views of the change of language:

There has been a lot of change in language and language revitalization in bringing the language back. There have been a lot of elders trying to teach people the language. I think it is up to all of us to go to the elders and let them know they want to learn the language. This is done personally or at schools. A lot of the language revitalization is done at the schools. Here it is the Bug School they teach the children the language, basic stuff, and it is all traditional spiritual ways of doing things. They teach the children the basics: how are you, what are you doing, where are you going, what is this? Again, this comes back to identity of who they are because we get people out there who learn our language but they are not of our culture and they lead us in the wrong way. That is why we are so concerned and we ask a lot of questions before we do anything like this. Our talking comes from the past and leading into the future of how things could be. Like I

said a lot of our descended are 10 to 30 years old and they cannot be enrolled, they cannot be classified as natives anymore because there is so much intermarriage. We have a few small pockets left in the communities that are full blood. I am full blood and probably one of the very few around here that can that can trace our ancestors back.

Some people are putting the language onto tapes or written down as best as they can. We do have dictionaries and a lot of the elders are putting it down before it is lost. For different reasons our ceremonies that are really helpful healing cannot be written down or put on tapes because of the sacredness. That is why it is critical for our children to go to the ceremonies to learn this and while they are doing this they will also learn the language that is spoken in a lot of our ceremonies and what they mean.

Another participant disclosed, “A lot of them don’t know the Ojibwe language. I am sorry to say that I am one of them. I know a lot of it, but I cannot speak the language. I can’t teach my children and I always tell them I wish I would of listened to my grandparents more and my parents as they were all fluent. I can understand a little bit, but I can’t speak it.”

### **Changes in Language and Its Effects on Community**

All of the participants talked about numerous changes or losses that have happened through time. Some participants felt that a lot of the changes or loss of spirituality, land, culture, language, community, and a way of living are directly linked to the laws and genocides of the people throughout history that have left lingering effects in the communities that are divided as a result a way of living has changed. One participant stated,

Loss of language means that we are losing a part of our identity and who we are.

This is one of the main reasons that I can think of. Each tribe, each nation, was given a

way to speak and how to do things and their spirituality, medicine, and all of this came through the language itself. It has to be passed on to our children to keep it in our community or a lot of the meaning and words will be lost if we don't pass the language and culture on. Now we go to a different community up in Canada where the language is really strong yet. Their way of saying it, their punctuation is different so we lose the translation back and forth. It is all Ojibwe people up there. We are *anishinabe* people. Throughout the different communities one word or phrase is said differently but they carry the same meaning. We say things the way we are taught and it is the geographical way of changing things. Women also speak the Ojibwe language different in fluctuation. The men will have different fluctuation and it could change the word. You have to be careful when you are listening to someone and how they say and how you put it together as others that listen can hear it too.

Another participant's view of the loss of language is stated,

The loss of language and a lot of our traditional ways have been lost along with respect. The main thing that has been lost is respect. The young people don't have a lot of respect for their elders. They have not learned their traditional ways. Respect is one of the main things. I think that if a lot more people knew Ojibwe language it would help our community as there is no swear words in Ojibwe. I also think people would learn to respect more as they would have all the language and they could speak it.

One participant stated, "People will be lost spiritually as they don't know who or what they are, who do I go, who do I see, and this is changing from the mobility of our community traveling from one community to another."

### **What is a Healthy Community?**



**Violence.** Another theme that all of the participants discussed were the loss of safety in the community. All 6 participants discussed with sadness that the community is full of drugs, alcohol, and violence. The sense of safety and security has been lost with the neighbors and community. All participants talked about how drugs and alcohol have wrecked the community, hurting the children, taking the children and healthy families, and the loss of good employment. People worry about robbery and being assaulted just walking down the road. One participant elder discussed the concern of the rising effects of fetal alcohol syndrome with children and adults because of the high number of alcohol-dependent families. Another participant talked about the high rate of suicide that affects the youths and even adults who have higher-paid positions in the community as people get overwhelmed with stress. Four of the 6 participants talked about the devastating effects of the school shooting in Red Lake.

**Racism.** Another emerging theme was racism on and off the reservation between youths and families. All the participants talked about the hurt and pain caused by racism in multiple ways, from getting appropriate medical care, employment, mental health illness, being harshly charged for minor crimes, spirituality, and many others. One participant stated,

With all the drugs in the communities I don't think we have a healthy community. There are just so many drugs. The lack of people working that are short on money is what causes the drug problem. The people here use a lot of pot and I don't think it is any worse than alcohol, but look at the people that are charged with it now. Think of how it affects people's background going through police records. All that does is prevent people from doing different work and prevents people from getting jobs. They can't get it if they have anything on their background. This is all going to keep carrying on as this is the livelihood here.

Another very wise elder (Participant 5) shared a story about being in the military at night sharing stories, values, and beliefs with other soldiers. This elder said it perfectly, “Before night we were all different people with different races and culture from all over the world and when the day came to night we were all the same people that wanted the same things and that is the way the world should be. People need to work together to help one another reach their goals, passions, beliefs, and values.”

Participant 2 talked about the prejudices in dealing with Caucasian people in discussions of land treaties. One of the participants described how the city of Bemidji carries a lot of prejudice, especially in the medical system, as she stated,

They don't care about what kind of care they give to Indian people. It feels like they are just killing us off, that is what they are doing. Some of the professionals in Bemidji community talk about Red Lake and enrolled members getting these big government checks every month and that is not so. Some people that knew better would try and correct others, but it was like they did not want to hear it. The stereotypes here are terrible still today. I seen it in the paper a couple years ago that this one said all you see in Wal-Mart is Indians. The saying went on that Red Lakers filled up their carts from all those government checks which again is not the case. The stereotypes of enrolled members driving nice fancy pickups with reservation plates that are paid by the government, well, that is not the case either. People write these comments on that Craig's list for everyone to see and write more posts on. Someone wrote that on there about a Red Lake enrolled member and our people commented back. All the comments back and forth were awful.

The racism at the Bemidji hospital is horrible. They say they are there to take care of their patients, to save lives, to help another person, they have always said that. I have heard of many stories about patients at Bemidji hospital that die, family members died, and people say if you want to die go to Bemidji hospital. They just think we are stupid. I told that nurse too that Bemidji is so prejudiced they won't care how they treat the Indian. I feel they are just doing the most expensive things that cost the most money from the Indian people because they don't care. The University of Minnesota is so nice. I couldn't get over their care, they were so kind.

When you lose a family member you always stay with them until the funeral home comes and gets them and once they go to the grave site you do not leave until your loved one is completely covered. On the reservation they let the whole family in for visiting and most places off reservation they limit visiting to two people. The Indian way of life is very family oriented and people seem to care more. The non-Indian will only consider husband, wife, and kids, as immediate family and they forget about mom, dad, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. We claim everyone in our family.

One participant talked about being safe in the community, eliminating the drugs and alcohol. Parents teaching their children honesty will bring back a healthy community, as she stated,

A healthy community would be where we could walk free on the roads. Nobody was drinking and roaring up and down the roads hollering. If everyone would just do the drinking to a limit and keep it away from the children, especially our children as our children are our future. We are teaching them the wrong way with a lot of this stuff. I wish that this was the way it was now with people casually drinking with people and can

enjoy it, but not abuse it so it doesn't affect our younger people so they can be healthier for people. I know that is one thing that they lost in parenting is honesty. You have to respect the children and show them that you respect them because that is what is lost between parents and children now days.

Another participant said that a part of bringing back a healthy community is practicing traditional ways. He stated,

A healthy community would be where everyone spoke the language, they did the oral ceremonies, they helped one another; there were no drugs, alcohol, and no violence in the communities. Another contributing piece to a healthy community would be respecting Mother Earth, elders, respecting one another, along that opens up a big circle of things, and doing things. Sharing, helping caring, where they do that when the children now a day's belong to gangs as they don't know who they are. A healthy community would be younger people sharing with their elders, healing their elders, brother, grandmother, dad, brother, uncle. A lot of the kids say I am a warrior in a gang. A true warrior is someone that will come and sit with someone when they are sick and share to be with them. They would be willing to carry an elderly lady's groceries. They do not take from the community, they give back. Once they give back they will gain more.

This is what I would like to see in our community. If people would do this they would get healing from that. I would like to see language, our way of life changing, and again be able to leave our home without locking our doors, not being in fear of being assaulted on the street because of gangs. A mixture of cultures that cause the kids to act the way they do now days. When I served in Vietnam I served aside all races, right alongside of them. At night when we come to a huddle we sat and shared our knowledge,

happiness, aspirations, and dreams through our talks. I found out that we all had the same things. That was at night. Think about it, if we all lived in a dark world there would be no difference in our people.

### **Restoring Healthy Community**

All elders discussed the need of restoring language and culture starting with teaching the children Ojibwe and culture in school. One participant said,

To restore our communities we need to go back to our traditional ways.

People need to know who they are and be proud of who they are. People need to know who they are, what we are, and they can be safer and teach this to their children. We need to get rid of all those drugs, fighting, and all those diseases that people brought into our communities. Teach people the ceremonies, language, and all the basic stuff. People need to know who their grandparents are, where they come from as that develops a sense of identity as you know who you are.

We need to have healthy families without drugs, alcohol, no felonies, and laws that keep families together and not tear them apart. We need fathers to be in the homes so the mothers are not doing things alone. There are too many multiple fathers or mothers in one family because of the way that they are taught and shown as that is how they grew up. If we could change this it would bring our children back to our way of life. The creator gave us one life, one person, and one mate. If you go way back you live with the same person for life as we made that commitment to them. We stay with them through sickness and health. Now days if someone get sick or goes to jail they just find a new partner. Today when we hear of someone getting married we tell them once you make that commitment

you stay with that person. Teach the children a lot of our morals and values that are deeply engrained in our language and culture that will bring us back to a healthy community.

### **American Heroes**

Another emerging theme was that 2 of the 3 male participants graciously shared some of their stories of the wars they have fought for our country and our people. This researcher admires them for their integrity, honesty, kind hearts, and pure souls for fighting for us to ensure we were safe back home. One participant told his story of being in the military when he earned not only one, but many purple hearts during his active duty fighting in World War II, which sent him home severely wounded. One participant stated,

I had some people come and visit me from the Navaho reservation, those Navaho code-talkers. They come down to talk with me as at that time they were writing a book that they were going to use for their language. That book came out two years later and they autographed it and everything for me. They are using the books in school now. That is the language that they used in World War II. The Japanese was breaking the United States codes so they were reusing the Indian language to speak it back and forth to interpret it and give it to the commanders that are non-Indian people in their language to tell them what is going on because the Japanese couldn't understand the different language. For the Indian people they had so many different dialects that they couldn't understand the Navaho language. I have a book here somewhere on that. They have made a movie on the Navaho code-talkers.

### **Personal Information of Participants**

All the participants reside on one of the reservations in a northern rural Minnesota tribe. All the elders are enrolled in the tribe where they reside. All of the elders were raised in that area or not far from the area in which they currently live. One participant stated,

I grew up in predominately White community without my culture that was in a nearby community off the reservation. I was brought here 30 years ago for my spiritual and traditional healing and this is where I have stayed. In an organization act my grandfather got relocated to White Earth reservation. I have a lot of family here and I have a lot of family in White Earth. I have family on all the local reservations. In our way of life we say our family that is by blood or adoption. I was adopted by a large family here and they all call me uncle and brother now. In our way of life the tobacco ceremony that was preformed makes me binded to that family. Even though I am not blood to that family the tobacco ceremony is even stronger than if I was born of the same mother and father. The tobacco ceremony is stronger than any written law. The courts, federal United States Supreme Court accept our ways of adoption so no one can tell any difference.

All participants were married and were 60+ years old. Two of the elders discussed being married for 50 years, growing up together in the same place they are living today. They both attended the same school on the reservation. Three elders grew up with their parents and moved out of the home between the ages of 12 and 16. One participant joined the military at the age of 16 and left the area for years in the service and came back as a wounded war hero. He stated,

I was born and raised here with my parents and moved in with my grandparents around the age of 12. I started in the service in the 1960s and I was gone until 1972. I told

them when I came back I was shot up, paralyzed, and the whole unit I was in was a white vest. Yet, I know veterans now that were laying saying they went to school and how to get PTSD, claimed different wounds to get a pension. When I went to the VA they wanted to check me for PTSD, pose threats, I went in the doctor, a woman doctor from Britain. That was many years ago now. She looked at me and said nope, you don't have PTSD. You Indian people don't get PTSD. I had come back to the states and I took commander and I do pretty well now. They asked me how I would come out and I told them what she said and they fired her. I don't think that I have that Post Stress, but the wife says I do. They told me that they want to send me back through there again, but I am satisfied with where I am at with the money I get from them. I am pretty well known in this community and everyone supports me and respects me around here for it. It is just that my outlook is different than everyone else. I have been away so I have seen what life is like away. Everybody that has been here thinks this is the way that life is and it is not.

Two of the participants attended a mission school. All of the participants graciously shared stories of the living conditions of how it was for them growing up as children and the world evolving to nowadays. One participant stated,

When I moved back in 1972, I had indoor toilets and electricity. They did not get electricity until 1964. We had no indoor plumbing and we lived in a tarpaper shacks with boards that were green and are all frost in the winter time with a little airtight stove with a 5-gallon pail we used for a pot. The next morning it would all be froze. I remember someone would have to stay up through the night to keep the fire going so no one froze in the house. There were a lot of positive changes for our housing that made a big



difference. The people that have gone from here they go into the Army or the Marines and they come back and they fall back into the same old rut too. A lot of them that come back make up stories to get funding and everything. I come back paralyzed from being shot up and I didn't get a pension until 2000 so they said the Army actually owes me a half million dollars and they ask me why I never put in for it and I am happy with where things are at now.

### **Better Serving Youths and Families**

To better serve the children and families is to reach out to each individual or family that is involved in helping the community grow and prosper, to help the elderly who carry the knowledge and wisdom. One participant stated,

You can learn more by going to visit traditional people and medicine people to see how they live, what they do, how they react, the way that they do things, where they go, how they treat each other, how they treat other people, how do they live, how do they take care of themselves when they are experiencing emotional stress. You need to see how people take care of themselves when they have body aches and then you will know how to help someone else. If you don't understand how to help yourself in traditional, how can you help someone else? If you want to learn, show up around here when we are doing ceremony. Come join in, come sit, come listen, watch, observe, and ask questions because once that tobacco is passed in ceremony that is when to ask questions. Someone in that group will always answer you in the right way. Don't be afraid to ask for help as I did not know anything 30 years ago either. I learned from the tobacco and the elders.

That is a big difference in our culture, we accept things where the European ways of things is ask why, how, what. We just accept things and sometimes that is the hardest

part of living this life is accepting things. We simply do as we are told by our elders as we were given those gifts to do that. Some people say its instincts and others say it was something that was engrained in us and coming together as people knowing you, your abilities, and what you should do. A lot of people will expect you to do certain things as that is your responsibility to our people. We in turn gain more knowledge in helping in healing people. It is sharing these stories that help us understand. In ceremonies because of its sacredness of things that do come together in a circle in ceremony it has a lot of strength there. If we ask for help it will come to us. When I forget something, it just comes, how to do it, when to do it, what to say, and what to do. I have been taught to help people, we don't hurt people. If someone asks for food or money we give as that is our way of life. We give without expecting anything back.

You do good things; they will come back to you. When we doubt or question something we will ask other elders for advice as we are all learners and none of us know everything. If someone comes to me to make them a pipe, I will, but first I need to know who. Did you have a dream? Did the medicine man or spiritual man tell you to have that? Then I will ask them how they dreamed about it. They need to write it down, draw it out, and show me something. That is our bond and written ways of doing things.

Professionals in all departments from probation, criminal justice, the court system, social workers in all areas and expertise, mental health workers, and substance abuse counselors along with traditional medicine men, teachers, educations, tribal office, need to collaborate on a system of explaining each other's roles in the community, how they affect one another. They need to provide advocacy for the young children by mentoring programs, support groups or programs,

activity centers that provide educational supervision that helps with homework, support for daily struggles, incentive programs, and prevention/intervention programs that emphasize family and community wholeness while instilling those values, beliefs, and traditions to enrich the lives of teaching. People can learn from one another of how to live a life in a good way while teaching their children those same core values. One participant stated,

What we need is for people to step up and speak up and stand up for themselves, which they are not. They are a little bit too bashful and shy now days. They think that once they have a drink in them they are more old school and talkative. Why does this have to happen, why do someone do this or that, or why don't you talk about it? People talk about it when they are drunk. A lot of people need to sober up, speak up more, and do what they wanted. People say they are going to do this or that and end up right back into the drugs and that is affecting our children. It makes it challenging as everyone is related. A lot of people say that we should put Indian children in Indian homes where they can learn all their ways and everything but if they knew their ways they wouldn't have to lose their children in the first place. If you ever did a study or researched it you would be surprised at how many children are born addicted. I knew it was happening, but I was surprised it was so high. There is a lot of fetal alcohol syndrome around here and we see a lot of it. You can look at people and tell some of the children my age and you can look at them and tell. A lot of people have to just sober up and agree that we need to do this and stand up and speak out. I have family where their babies are taken right from the hospital and the mother is right back to the drugs again. The withdrawals for the babies are awful.

## Discussion

### Strengths and Limitations

This qualitative study had some strength and some limitations. This research will benefit others in understanding some of the traditional ways of doing things for Native American youths and families that are culturally enriched by elders. For example, professionals who do not understand Native American culture may view children as abandoned even though in the traditional Native American way, leaving a child with extended family is considered the norm (Byers, 2010).

Another strength is that the researcher allowed the participants to tell their personal stories of loss and healing through their lived experience in their community. This researcher firmly believes that individuals know themselves better than anyone else ever could. What better way to learn wisdom from the people who lived through some of the traumatic historical events in their culture and to learn from their ways of individuals, families, and communities to heal? This research is not only to learn, but to advocate with the people to help preserve the meaning of family; protect the children, community, language, and safe housing; and provide support for the children to have a good education, revitalizing their spirituality and culture.

One of the limitations of this research project is that it had a small sample size that does not represent everyone in the community or tribe. Hence, it provides a better understanding only of the individual and family views within their culture and their worldviews.

This study provides a wealth of knowledge to better understand those individuals' or families' culture or loss and how that affects the youths we serve today in our local communities.

A limitation of this study from the very beginning was that the professionals from the IRB at the University of St. Thomas did not understand the intentions of this researcher to

present tobacco or cloth to the participants. Doing so is considered by Native Americans to be a sign of respect and appreciation, but it was viewed by the IRB as very disrespectful to the participants. This researcher, who has some familiarity with working with and practicing spiritual events with traditional people, felt shame and humiliation at being required to do something that did not feel culturally appropriate.

In a professional area with master's or doctoral-level social workers, this researcher never dreamed it would be seen as a possible sexist or unethical practice to approach elders with tobacco or cloth. Because of time limitations, this researcher could not argue the point with the professionals or the IRB. It is hoped that this experience will educate other professionals and provide an understanding that just because something is viewed as strange, abnormal, or unethical in some cultures does not mean it cannot be socially acceptable or appropriate in another culture. It nearly makes me ill thinking I may have betrayed my own values doing what I was told to do, to get where I need to be. The sad fact of it is when I explained this to the participants they did not agree with the situation, but they were not surprised.

This researcher was more dismayed as social work ethics that are deeply engrained teach us to ask questions if we do not know, to work within our professional realm, and to respect and appreciate everyone for who they are, and meet them at their level. Yet, this ignorance and disrespect still happens and is still being taught at a master's-level program when I feel we should be the leaders to teach other professionals in our community that we do not have social work knowledge or understanding of culture. I kindly appreciate my committee members, my professor, and my classmates for listening to my frustrations and understanding and offering ideas or suggestions to ease the situation. I deeply appreciate this learning experience.

### **Change of Laws**

All six elders who were interviewed related one way or another that some forms of changes in their community were directly linked to the government and laws. One of the traditional elder participants discussed how the laws in the 1880s (Struthers & Eschiti, 2004) that were enacted to eliminate heathenish practices played a vital role in changing the dynamics of a sense of community and practicing traditional ways of healing and changing those ways. Nearly a century later, in 1978, it became legal to practice traditional ways, but for nearly a century, traditional Native American people could not practice their natural ways of healing, which is absolutely a factor in the changes in the community now.

All six of the elders discussed in different ways the effects of children being taken out of the home and into the foster care system. They talked about the children losing their identity, not knowing who they are or where they belong, and how scary it is for young families to raise children in today's social welfare system. Hand (2005) and Cross (2006) discussed out-of-home placements with Indian children being away from their families being emotionally, intellectually, and socially lost from losing that sense of belonging. Two of the elders talked about families that they personally know whose children were removed from the home and placed with kinship care (relative placement) or into the foster care system. According to Byers (2010), in the 1970s, 25% to 35% of Native American children were removed from their homes and 85% of those children were placed in non-Indian homes. One participant talked about his personal journey of being adopted and that the laws now protect Indian ways of adoption. As a researcher I have worked with children in foster care in Beltrami County with a large majority being Native American youths, the majority of whom were not reunited with their family. The majority of the children

resided in foster care in non-Indian homes until they aged out, which also agrees with the literature that is presented.

The majority of the participants talked about how the loss of land and land allotments has changed a sense of community from unity to everyone owning their own piece of land that directly links back to the Dawes Act of 1887 (Peacock & Day, 2000) by which land was divided into small plots being assigned to individual families instead of the whole community or tribe owning and living together on the land freely. One elder discussed the frustration of trying to get the land back that was once owned by the tribe that was sold to non-Indian people. The way that people treat the elders with such disrespect when they never did anything wrong also relates to the Dawes Act of 1887, as during this time a large percentage of the tribal land was sold to non-Native people. Some of the elders felt that this contributes to the lingering effects of changes in community, identity of people, and racism. The elders didn't specify certain laws or treaties that caused certain events, but the discussion was clear that loss of land and divided land played vital roles in how the community is today, as everything was more individualized instead of community focused.

One of the participants talked about how his father who was a part of the push for Native American people to be removed and relocated to a northern reservation in Minnesota (Cross, 2006; Norrgard, 2009). From 1850 through 1870 many Ojibwe people were removed by force from Wisconsin to Michigan to Minnesota to relocate to a reservation in which hundreds of Native American people died from resistance. People need to realize that this information is not just a part of a book that happened a long time ago. This trauma is very personal to many families as it affected the roots of who they are; it is not that long ago and is not forgotten.

All of the elder participants discussed the large amount of drugs, alcohol, and violence in their communities. Perry (2006) explores the devastating effects of crime on and off the reservation by people being singled out, humiliated, or assaulted when not doing anything wrong. One elder talked about the racism in school growing up being a minority, being teased and picked on as a child as he still remembers more than 40 years later. Another elder talked about people being convicted for minor crimes and not being able to get employment, a subject also discussed by Perry (2006), which may help to explain the high unemployment rates along with high crime rates in all three communities. Many of the elders discussed the verbal racism from people and/or businesses and local hospital or clinics that still occurs because of racism.

The majority of the elders talked about knowing someone or a family member who has been taken by suicide. Echo Hawk (1997) reported that Native American youths are 3 to 4 times more likely than any other ethnic group to commit suicide. In addition, Native Americans in Minnesota have higher rates of premature death and violent injury than those of non-Indians. Hadjiyanni and Helle (2008) report that suicide rates of 18–19 year old male Native Americans are six times higher than any other demographic group in the state. As a professional in Beltrami County, I am aware that the suicide rates are alarming.

All of the elders at one point talked about the effects of the shooting in Red Lake that killed 10 people and left 16 wounded by a child, as also discussed in Littlefield et al. (2009) when they discussed the devastating effects of one of the largest school shootings. As the researcher, volunteering at a nearby school during this traumatic event, I served many of the children who were relatives of children that were involved in the shooting. It was traumatic for everyone involved, including the families and community. It was well known through these interviews that Native American traditional people are about helping, giving, and going above



and beyond to live and help others live in peace with everything and everybody. The researcher could see and feel the deep pain of the participants as they talked about the shooting as it was nieces, nephews, aunties, or uncles who were directly affected by the shooting. In a close-knit community where everybody knows everybody, things become personal and private and the whole community hurts. They will not forget this day.

This researcher suggests that all 6 participants practice storytelling ways of teaching their children or others about ways of life, as this was personally witnessed throughout this process. As explained by Struthers and Eshchiti (2004), storytelling is used to pass on stories about their life to families that teach people how to live in harmony.

Two elder participants from different reservations talked specifically about the worrisome effects of fetal alcohol syndrome in the community. Allison and Vining (2013) reports that 85% of disabilities in Native American people are preventable. All the elders discuss very clearly that all three reservations in which participants lived had high levels of drugs, alcohol, and violence that brings much worry to the participants for their family and their community, as they feel unsafe.

Three of the elders disclosed that they personally use humor as a way to deal with life circumstances as a means of survival. Garrett et al. (2005) discussed how Native Americans use humor as a way to survive. All of the elders shared personal stories of practicing or experiencing traditional ways of healing in one way or another, using powwows, ceremonies, smudging, sweat lodges, natural medicine of herbs, visions, animal messengers, and pipe ceremonies (see also Ryback & Decker-Fitts, 2009; Hadjiyanni & Helle, 2008; Portman & Garrett, 2006; Morris, 1996). All these traditional ways of doing things have a purpose and a deep meaning, but each

particular thing and purpose is different. Each practice or object is clearly explained, and tribes do things in a certain way that is specific to that tribe.

All the elders discussed the importance of rekindling the language and culture by teaching the children traditional ways, and for parents to learn parenting skills and teach their children the traditional ways incorporating those life skills to create a healthier community. Loewer (2003) briefly describes how the Ojibwe people are in a process of cultural restoration by orally passing on their cultural traditions through formal and informal ways.

### **Implications for Social Work Practice**

The importance of doing this research with Native American elders is that it enhances the researchers' understanding of her own identity while understanding the Native American way of life with traditional healing, changes in the community, and ways of doing things to better provide service to the youths and families that I serve. This researcher has learned through this process that even if people have high-level positions with a Ph.D. or master's degree and have the power to move or change things, they can cause more harm than good if they truly do not understand the culture or needs within a culture, family, or community. Usually tightly knit communities trust others who are tightly woven within the community and do not trust outsiders who want to come in and change things. This researcher feels that best practice would be to meet with the traditional elders, community members, or tribal council to seek their advice and guidance to offer support and learn ways to strengthen the community and enrich lives.

This researcher believes that it is critical to learn from the elders, as an elder is like a professor who teaches us things. An elder is proficient in understanding the culture and ways of doing things as they were taught in traditional ways and have lived experience. There is only so much information that one can get from books, especially when it comes to traditional ways and

culture. In addition, a lot of Native American ways that are embedded in their culture are not written down, but are passed down verbally so people can learn only by going to meet with the elders in the community or by participating in ceremony. This researcher does understand that the information that was shared is based on a small number of people, but it would make a difference to those people, tribal members, and youths and families if they knew they felt respected and understood when they were asking for help. This researcher has gained a lot of understanding and knowledge of culture that cannot be learned anywhere else but by doing this project and listening to the elders firsthand.

As professionals in the community it is our duty, obligation, and commitment to learn and help children and families. It is our personal and professional obligation to gain a further understanding of trauma and healing within our Native American communities as the rates of crime, suicide, out-of-home placements, high school dropouts, teen pregnancy, and extreme poverty are high and the children are hurting.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Because there are very few elders in some of the reservations, it is important to understand their traditions, culture, language, and ways of doing things because they will be lost permanently if they are not passed on. I think understanding how history and trauma affect the children and families in our community today are vital to understand how to help restore a healthy family and community. It is also critical to understand the complex trauma that a child or family has been through or witnessed in order to help them decrease symptoms of mental illness, suicide, safety, and poverty.

It is important to conduct further research to discover how community trauma and the generational trauma that children and families have faced affect the community and individuals

now, to identify the need of programs that will build communities and provide support to reduce chemical use, gangs, high school dropout, out of home placements, teen pregnancy, suicide, and increase physical, spiritual, and mental well-being. Once the needs of the community are established, programs that are culturally appropriate to teach the children and families in culturally and spiritually ways of living can carry on the traditions. These traditions can incorporate life skills to help children and families with effective parenting skills while incorporating the traditional ways.

Our practice and licensure enforces core values and principles that are instilled in the professionalism of respecting others and their culture beliefs. It is critical for professionals to continue to learn and grow in working with communities of all cultures, and thus it is important for anyone who works with Native American people to understand their historical traumas, values, and beliefs as those events drastically affect the children, families, and communities that we serve today.

### **Conclusion**

The findings from this research study suggest that Native Americans are losing their traditional ways or see people choosing not to practice them due to many of the lingering effects from historical trauma and laws. One noteworthy understanding is that many people may feel that a lot of the trauma and history is something of the past, but it is very clear that many people that were directly affected by loss of land, boarding schools, or other traumas are still alive today to share their story.

Practicing traditional spirituality was outlawed until a little over 30 years ago after a century of not being able to practice. This is still very much affecting communities. Some naive minds might think this is all in the past, but many remember it like happened yesterday. It is this

researcher's perspective that this is still current news and not something of the past, and there is deep pain and trauma that occurred from something that happened not very long ago. There is a high incidence of drugs and alcohol in their communities, and elders feel that it is affecting their children and future generations, that the community is unsafe. Some of the elders also said that in the tight-knit community where everyone knows everyone else or their relatives, changing the community is a personally challenging dynamic. There is a great need to revitalize the language, culture, spirituality, and respect for the elders and among one another in the community to reduce the drugs, alcohol, and violence and bring balance among members. To hear the elders speak of such love and compassion for the people in their community is unheard of in a society of today. The elders take so much pride in who they are, what they are, where they are in their life, and it is truly touching how much effort they make to try to help others do better.

The much-needed professionals in multiple areas in our local communities should be advised to meet with elders in the communities, attend ceremonies, attend professional trainings on Native Americans, meet with members of tribal councils, and visit with others who live in a community to ask questions to further assist children and families that we serve. One might not understand many practices and beliefs that are deeply embedded in a culture, and those practices and beliefs may be a significant contributing factor in bringing the person, family, or community back to wellness.

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## Appendix A

### Interview Questions

537165-1

1. What does healing mean to you?
2. What are some of your ways of healing that you, your family, and your community practice?
3. From the stories that you have been told by your family or other members of your community, has there been change in healing ways?
4. If so, what kinds of changes or loss have taken place within your family or community?
5. How does this change affect your family or community?
6. How does this affect the youth or the next generation of your family and community?
7. What kinds of changes have happened that affected many ways for you, family, or community?
8. Has there been a change in language within your family?
9. If so how does the change in language affect the family, individuals, and community?
10. What does a healthy community look like you to?
11. What do you think should be done to make the community safer and healthier for future generations?
12. What is your age?
13. What is the community that you grew up?
14. How long have you lived in this community?
15. Do you have a lot of family in this community?

**CONSENT FORM****UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS**

Native American Spirituality and Healing in a Euro-American World

**Appendix B****IRB Tracking # 537165-1**

I am conducting a study about Native American ways of healing for individuals, families, and rural communities. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because you have stated that you are interested in participating. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: me, Carol Johnson, a graduate student at the St. Catherine University/ University of St. Thomas School of Social Work. My professor is Dr. Felicia Sy, who is overseeing this research project.

**Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to learn ways of healing in a rural Native American community that could benefit service to individuals, families, and community, and to create a more holistic approach to serving others that is culturally sensitive.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you to do the following things: answer semi-structured, open-ended questions relating to your perceptions of Native American ways of healing to benefit individuals, families, and communities with providing a holistic approach. The estimated length of the interview will be between 45 and 60 minutes with the time framed explained prior to the start of the interview. I plan to audio record the interviews in a private location such as a private office or home after your permission. At the beginning of the interview you will be provided with a \$10.00 gift card from Wal-Mart.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

This study has minimal risks and minimal benefits. Those interviewed are experienced teachers, healers, or leaders of the community. The participants are well versed in methods of self-care and the likelihood of self-distress is minimal. Nevertheless, I am providing a list of mental health professionals that participants may choose to access at their expense if they feel the need.

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you in any way. The types of records I will create include a masters list that does not have any names or revealing personal information, and computer records, audio tapes, and transcriptions that only the researcher will get to see. All research information will be destroyed May 31, 2014. The computer will have a locked pass code that will be locked in my personal office at home. All paper documents or audio recordings will be kept in a locked box and stored in my locked office cabinet at home in my personal office that also locks.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time up to and until March 1, 2014. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the data collected about you will be immediately destroyed. If you choose to skip any question, I will directly proceed to the next question.

**Contacts and Questions:**

My name, the researcher, is Carol Johnson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at (218) 556-7967. My advisor’s name is Dr. Felicia Sy and her phone number is (651) 962-5813. You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-5341 with any questions or concerns.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study. I am at least 18 years of age. [If additional permissions are needed (e.g., audio or video recording, accessing private student or medical records), include these here.]

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Study Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name of Study Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Appendix C: Recruitment Telephone Script****IRB Tracking # 537165-1**

Telephone Script

P=Potential Participant

R=Researcher

R= Hello, my name is Carol Johnson, I am looking to speak with (P).

P=I am (P)

R= My name is Carol Johnson and I am a Masters student in the School of Social Work at the University of St. Thomas and St Catherine University of St. Paul, Minnesota. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of my professor Felicia Sy, on perspectives to people in the local community that are enrolled or work on a rural reservation in Minnesota. As part of my research, I am conducting interviews with individuals that are enrolled or work on a rural reservation to learn ways of healing and the changes that have occurred.

I received your name from (public directory, internet, or snowball sample). I understand you are enrolled and/or work on a local reservation and could potentially be interested in participating in my research project. I am looking for interview participants on their personal stories or ways of healing and changes of those ways throughout time. Is this a convenient time for you to ask you a few questions and provide you with further information about the study and interview process?

P=No, could you call back later (ask what time would be more convenient to call this P back.

Or

P=Yes

R= I would like to verify that you meet the expectations for this particular study. Would you consider yourself enrolled in a local community reservation in Minnesota and/or working on a local reservation? Would you consider yourself to be a good candidate for this study? Why or Why not?

P=Response

R=I will be conducted interviews starting in January of 2014. The interviews will last about 45 minutes to one hour and will be audio recorded to capture all information, and later transcribed

verbatim for analysis by myself or a hired staff at the University of St. Thomas. Involvement in this interview is entirely voluntary and confidentiality is ensured. The questions will focus on the ways of healing as well as the changes of those healing ways. With your permission, I would like to email/mail/fax you an informational letter which has all of these details along with contact names and numbers on it to help assist you in making a decision about your participation in this study.

P=No Thank you OR

Sure. (Gets contact information from potential participant i.e., mailing address/fax number/email\_?)

R=Thank you very much for your time. May I call you in 2 or 3 days to see if you are interested in being interviewed? Once again, if you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me on my confidential cell phone at 218-556-7967

P=Good bye.

R=Thank you, I will talk to you soon, Good bye.

**Appendix D**

**Flyer**

**IRB Tracking # 537165-1**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I attend the University of St. Thomas. I am conducting a study about spirituality and ways of healing and changes within culture. I am looking to interview 8 to 10 people for 1 hour each. All participants must be 18 years old or older. I am looking for people who are enrolled or work on a reservation and are considered leaders, teachers, or educators in a rural community in Minnesota. This study has minimal risk and benefits.

**If interested in helping, please call Carol Johnson at (218) 556-7967.**