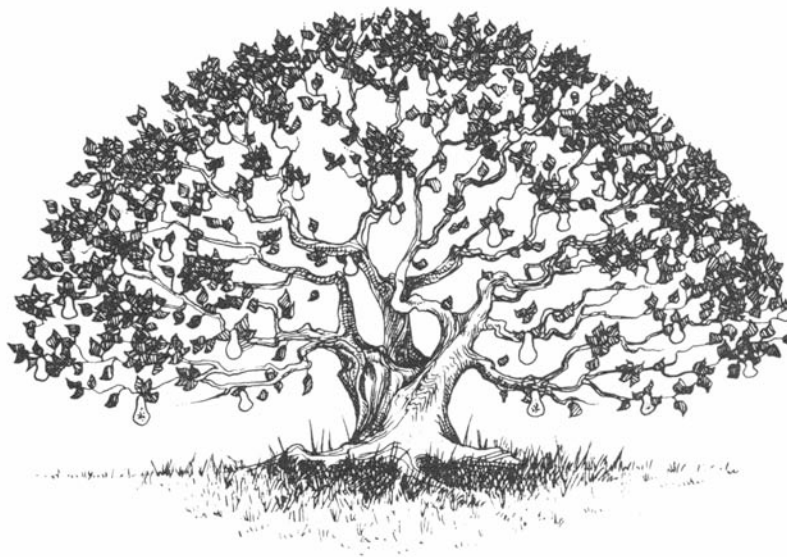


# UNITED INDIANS HEALING AND WELLNESS PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK



*Draft for discussion*

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# UNITED INDIANS HEALING AND WELLNESS PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

## INTRODUCTION

People access healing services for many reasons. Their life is out of control, they are hurting, their primary relationships are failing, they are in trouble with the law, or they have specific (presenting) issues such as addictions, physical or sexual abuse, chronic anger, depression, or a whole host of these and other problems in combination.

At the root of all of these is trauma. People have been hurt, and most likely they have been hurt by others who themselves were hurt (“hurt people hurt people”).

When we use terms such as “healing” or “therapy” it implies that someone is sick, that is that something is broken, lost or “out of balance” and that restoration is both necessary and possible.

Indigenous people of the Americas have a particular cultural and historical legacy that has produced widespread intergenerational trauma (i.e., the hurt is passed down in families and communities across generations). This trauma resides simultaneously within individuals of every age, and within their family and community systems.

From an Indigenous peoples’ perspective, the healing and wellness-related services and programs need to:

1. address core healing issues related to trauma, and not just presenting problems such as addictions, abuse, chronic anger, depression, etc., etc.;
2. address three critical dimensions or domains within which healing needs to take place; namely, (a) individuals, (b) families, and (c) communities.

None of these can be effectively isolated and dealt with out of context with the others.

During the past twenty years, a Native healing movement across North America has developed that has (collectively) learned a great deal about what healing is, what works and what doesn’t, and how to utilize the strengths and assets of Indigenous (and other) communities to build and sustain healing and wellness interventions and services that make a real and lasting difference to the people they are intended to benefit.

This document outlines a working framework for program action which the United Indians of All Tribes Foundation is utilizing to conceptualize and develop healing and wellness programs. Our framework reflects the lessons learned from the North American Native healing movement over the past several decades, as well as relevant leading edge research and practice around the world.

## LESSONS ABOUT HEALING AND THE HEALING JOURNEY<sup>1</sup>

*The lessons learned about healing in North American Indigenous communities can be summarized in the following way:*

- *Healing is possible for individuals and communities. Both appear to go through distinct stages of a healing journey.*
- *The healing journey is a long-term process, probably involving several decades.*
- *Healing cannot be confined to issues such as addictions, abuse or violence.*
- *Healing interventions and programs have most impact when they take place within the context of a wider community development plan.*
- *Community healing requires personal, cultural, economic, political, and social development initiatives woven together into a coherent, long-term, coordinated strategy.*
- *Such a coherent strategy requires integrated program development, funding delivery and on-going evaluation.*
- *Healing is directly connected to nation building. At some point, there needs to be a merger of program efforts between community healing activities and movements towards self-government and community development.*

### **What is Healing?**

1. Healing is a developmental process aimed at achieving balance within oneself, within human relationships and between human beings and the natural and spiritual worlds. It has to do with choosing to live in harmony with the basic values and teachings that are at the core of all Indigenous (as well as other) cultures. "Healing" actually describes a wide range of initiatives, impulses and efforts happening at the levels of the individual, the family, the community, organizations and institutions and the nation.
2. The concept of healing in Indigenous communities focuses on wellbeing rather than on sickness. It focuses on moving the population toward wholeness and balance. It includes all levels of the community from individual to nation, and embraces politics, economics, patterns of social relations and the process of cultural recovery. To those schooled in the abstracted disciplines of Euro-American universities, such broadened definitions seem to include everything and therefore seem to mean nothing. The important point that Indigenous people keep making is that their way of life-which was an integrated *system* of many dimensions-was taken away and if healing doesn't mean restoring some form of life that can support human well-being, then what does it mean?

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from "Mapping the Healing Journey" (2002). Lane, Bopp, Bopp and Norris. Solicitor General Canada, Ottawa and Four Worlds International [see [www.fourworlds.ca/publications](http://www.fourworlds.ca/publications)]

3. There are two distinct impulses within the community healing process. "*Healing as recovery*" essentially involves moving away from the pain and suffering experienced by a community in crisis. "*Healing as wellness*" involves moving towards and maintaining healthy patterns of life.
4. The healing journey may well take generations. It took generations for many communities to internalize the pain and trauma they now carry and it may take generations to move past them. Healing is possible, however, and although there will always be a need for programs to help people heal from the pain and suffering which is an inevitable part of life and to learn skills for healthy living, the type of intensive healing work which is now required will not necessarily always be needed. Currently, there are some special situations (such as the legacy of residential schools and years of colonialism), which require intensive healing work. In time this work is likely to shift from recovery to rebuilding new patterns of life.
5. *Healing as Decolonization*. At this point in history the healing journey has a lot to do with overcoming the legacy of dependency and dysfunction that are the result of decades of colonization, missionization and residential schools. The term "healing" refers to restoring human and community integrity and wellbeing that were destroyed by the aftermath of such historical trauma. It is certainly not confined to the restoration of mental health and the ending of dysfunctional behaviors such as abuse, addictions and violence, though it does, of course, include these things. Those working on the front lines of it sometimes describe community healing as "decolonization therapy".

### **The Community Healing Journey**

1. The healing process seems to go in cycles. There are periods of great movement and apparent growth and periods of stagnation and retreat. This is true of any learning endeavor, from an individual mastering a new skill to an organization reorienting itself around new principles. It is very important for those leading and supporting healing to understand the learning process. Often what seems to be stagnation and retreat is actually a plateau on which important consolidation and learning takes place. The periods of rapid growth are invariably preceded by long periods where "nothing much happens." Learning how to track these cycles is an important step in itself so that people can gain an appreciation for the type of work that must be done at the various stages of the journey.
2. Periods of rapid growth and development are often triggered by a crisis of some sort. If properly managed, such crises can create opportunities to mobilize people for rapid learning and coordinated action. Once the crisis loses its edge (either because the issue is dealt with to a significant extent or because people become discouraged, apathetic, bored, etc.), the healing process can really bog down as well. Because the healing work has become organized around a series of crises, it can be very difficult to shift gears in order to take advantage of new opportunities to mobilize the community to take responsibility for its problems.

### **The Individual Healing Journey**

1. People can heal, change, learn and grow. There are inspirational and effective leaders of healing processes nationwide who are a living testament to the possibility of transformation. Program initiatives across the country clearly demonstrate the life-altering power of engaging individuals (no matter how unhealthy they may be) in a long-term, systematic transformation process leading from dysfunction to wellness.
2. The personal and community healing journeys go hand-in-hand. The leaders of the healing movement have to pay careful attention to their own wellness or they will not be able to work effectively in their communities. At the same time, progress with the general wellness levels in the community gives the leaders the courage to continue and eventually the human resources they need to build on.
3. It is not possible to talk about "healing" or the "healing journey" in one simple definition. We can talk about the attributes that someone acquires through personal healing. For example, healthy people do not need to control others, are not crippled by fears from the past and have gained skills to look after themselves. They have strong confidence and self-esteem, respect themselves and others and can listen to what others say about you without taking it inside.
4. It is also possible to talk about healing in terms of the medicine wheel. Healing involves the whole person-body, mind, spirit and feelings. It involves the whole individual, the whole family, the whole community and the whole nation. It involves the whole cycle of life from childhood, to the time of youth, to our adult years and to eldership.
5. People only begin their healing journey when they are ready and that is often when they hit bottom. At this point, when they are in danger of losing something (i.e. their freedom, their relationship, their children, their job), people are ready to work. We have to be ready to work with people when they are ready (not in our time frames and on our terms).
6. Every recovering individual needs to have a dream (i.e. a vision and a plan) that lays out a pathway to a better future. The dream grows as people go further on their healing journey. For some the dream may entail getting more education and training. For others it may mean having access to credit or investment dollars. For still others, it may mean building viable partnerships or obtaining needed support and approval from the community leadership.

### **Elements of the Healing Journey**

1. Many different healing methods and modalities have been tried in communities. The lessons, both from community experience and the literature, is that there are many ways that are of value. Nothing works all the time or is appropriate for everyone. Body therapies, breath-work, spiritual healing, energy work, individual and group counseling approaches (of which there are more than 200 different documented forms), participation in traditional healing ways, participation in religious activities, recreation, skills training, arts and music, support groups, relaxation techniques and mind/body practices all have something to offer. Skilled helpers in communities are

aware of the multiple entry points available and are able to guide different people to a modality that will be helpful for them.

2. A major piece of the healing journey is understanding the past. What happened to us? What choices did we make that led to the layers of hurt? What was done to us? What did we lose? What did we use to have that we need to recover or rediscover?
3. "Forgiveness" is a controversial concept, given the justice-related issues connected to the legacy of residential schools. Nevertheless, forgiveness is an *essential* part of healing. Unless people learn to forgive (not forget), they are still holding onto feelings that hurt them. The healing journey requires taking full responsibility (as individuals, families and communities) for the work that needs to be done to overcome that legacy.
4. Often it takes a crisis (such as a disclosure of abuse on the part of a prominent person) to help the community overcome its denial that a problem exists and to recognize the need for healing.

# THE INDIVIDUAL HEALING JOURNEY

## Stage 1: The Journey Begins

*The healing journey of individuals often begins when they come face to face with some inescapable consequence of a destructive pattern or behavior in their life or when they finally feel safe enough to tell their story.*

They may have spent a significant part of their life unaware or denying that the pattern is destructive or may have believed that the rewards of the behavior outweighed the costs. But here they are (in jail, facing other legal consequences, pregnant, their spouse leaves, fired from work, tired of living this way, losing their kids, someone close dies, a spiritual awakening, being confronted, etc.) with some desire to change the way things are. The answer must be to stop the behavior. At this point people often enter some kind of treatment/therapy/support group or they may do it alone. Either way, the healing work remains the same. Often people make many attempts to start their healing but retreat again into denial and pain. When the threat of consequences outweighs the fear of opening up and trusting others or when people feel "sanctuary" (i.e. a sense of safety) in the relationship they develop with those working to support their healing then the journey can really begin. Usually the first steps involve telling their story, at first just to get it out and later to understand how the story is related to the pain and dysfunction in their lives.

It can be very hard to stop the behavior. The consequence of stopping may appear worse than continuing. People may go through many cycles of relapse and recovery. They may become stuck in this cycle for years - even a lifetime. The cycle will continue until they address the primary driving forces that gave rise to and maintain their patterns of dysfunction and addiction. There are two main reasons for this.

1. Substance abuse is usually a whole lifestyle and most addicts are part of an addictive sub-culture. Whether addicts get involved with the substance and then progress to the lifestyle or gain a sense of belonging within the sub-culture and find that substance abuse is the price of entry, their lives become oriented around a culture of addiction. Within this addictive sub-culture, the addicts' basic human needs are met - albeit in a way that has very high costs. Their friends and family, their group membership and sense of belonging, their activities, their daily routines, their diet, their social role, their sense of purpose and order, their dress, their language, their sexuality, their rituals, symbols and music, their livelihood and much more are shaped by the addictive sub-culture. Their whole world and identity are bound up with it. "Quitting" is like trying to get out of a moving vehicle. Treatment is not simply competing with the intoxication experience; it is required to provide an alternative pattern of living. Many people learn this the hard way when they return home from treatment centres.
2. Once the addictive behavior is stopped, traumatic feelings and fearful consequences often surface. Feelings of shame, worthlessness, anger, rage, grief, loneliness, guilt, depression and sadness may have festered and built up for years. Once addicts "quit," they become aware that such feelings dominate their inner landscape. They are likely to face terrifying ordeals - confronting abusers, being confronted by victims,

accepting one's inner nature or calling, taking responsibility for one's life. They may have no effective coping strategies to replace the addictive behavior itself. A vicious cycle can ensue in which the addiction is used to treat the symptoms brought about by the withdrawal from addiction or just the complexities and stresses of daily life itself.

3. The healing journey seldom means returning to a previous healthy life. It is a rite of passage which requires a separation from the old identity, a period of learning, guidance and support and the forging of a new identity, new patterns of life and new relationships.

## **Stage 2: Partial Recovery**

*At this stage individuals have mostly stopped their addictive behavior, but the driving forces that sustained it are still present.*

At this stage the journey involves struggling to uncover the roots of trauma from the past that caused the pain and dysfunctional behavior. It can be slow and painful work, but it can also be tremendously exhilarating. While the recovery is precarious, people often experience enthusiasm, excitement and renewed energy. They are doing something with their lives. They make discoveries about themselves. They may join new communities within which they gain acceptance and which rewards them for participating in the healing process. A new vision of possibility emerges. During this transition stage people need a lot of support. Many become involved in healing communities of some kind, whether they be therapeutic (such as A.A. or community treatment programs), religious (such as a church group) or focused on traditional cultural ways. These groups often meet many needs that were previously met by the addictive lifestyle and people may fully and wholeheartedly immerse themselves in this new "culture" (in some cases for the rest of their lives). The culture of recovery replaces the culture of addictions.

## **Stage 3: The Long Trail**

*Once someone has reached a hard-won sense of stability, it takes a great deal of courage, discipline and motivation to continue in the healing journey.*

The momentum begins to wear off, the length of the journey becomes apparent, support may drop off ("she's just obsessed with healing!"), opposition may be encountered ("Why can't she just let sleeping dogs lie?") and there is life to get on with. Many people stop doing the healing work once the pain becomes bearable or once life seems manageable. This can be a dysfunctional stability where the old behavior is no longer dominant ("I'm sober") but the consciousness that generated it still exists. It may come out in what seems to be less drastic or destructive ways. It may manifest in unhealthy and compulsive relationships with people, work, food, tobacco and gambling.

Ultimately, this stage is about developing a new identity and life pattern. It may be long, slow work. There may be long periods of stagnation, enlivened by periods of growth and change. There will be many mistakes made, many lessons to be learned. New

strategies and patterns will be tried on. Some will fit and some won't. Each person must find his or her own way through.

It is hard to walk this path alone. There are many things that can help a person to keep going: renewal experiences, supportive community, guides and mentors, participating in a disciplined path (such as traditional ceremonial cycles and activities) and on-going education. Much of the work is invisible because a person is building new foundations, putting down new roots.

#### **Stage 4: Transformation and Renewal**

*Ultimately the healing journey is about the transformation of consciousness, acceptance and spiritual growth.*

At this stage of the journey, it is no longer about dealing with the demons of the past. It becomes an attraction to a higher vision. There is a conscious determination to build one's life and community around life-enhancing principles (spiritual laws, original teachings, healthy virtues, etc.). There is a conscious articulation of the vision that motivates and draws you. The experience of the hurt self diminishes and the experience of universal self grows. As one's consciousness becomes more fully aligned with life-enhancing principles, one's outer life also naturally goes through profound changes. New relationships emerge. New pathways of expression and of service to the community become important parts of an emerging pattern of life. At this stage it often happens that people no longer need the "culture of recovery" and so participation in "healing" activities declines. Nevertheless, the self-centered focus of addictions has been replaced by a much more outward-looking orientation to serving others and a personal identity of dysfunction is replaced by a much richer, deeper identity anchored in culture and community.

# THE FOUR SEASONS OF COMMUNITY HEALING

## ***Background***

*The community healing process seems to go through distinct stages or cycles. Four distinct stages have been identified:*

*Stage 1: The Journey Begins (Thawing from the long winter)*

*Stage 2: Gathering Momentum (Spring)*

*Stage 3: Hitting the Wall (Summer)*

*Stage 4: From Healing to Transformation (Fall)*

Taken together, these stages form one type of "map" of the healing process, which can be useful both for understanding the current dynamics of the community process and determining future actions and priorities. It must be stressed at the outset that these stages are only approximate models of complex real-life events. They are not "the truth" although there is truth in them. They also do not take place in a linear way. They are more like ripples unfolding in a pool, where each new circle contains the previous ones. Following a review of this model by the six partner communities, it should be stressed that the cycle identified here could just as easily begin in the spring. The important thing is that it is a cycle.

As each stage progresses, those involved further develop their understanding and power to transform existing conditions. This development is primarily driven by a dynamic cycle of action and reflection that generates learning.

## **Stage 1: Winter - The Journey Begins**

*This stage describes the experience of crisis or paralysis that grips a community. The majority of the community's energy is locked up in the maintenance of destructive patterns. The dysfunctional behaviors that arise from internalized oppression and trauma are endemic in the community and there may be an unspoken acceptance by the community that this state is somehow "normal".*

Within this scenario one of two things may happen:

1. Key individuals begin to question and challenge the status quo, often making significant shifts in their own lives. Their personal journey is often characterized by service to their community as they begin to reach out to other individuals to provide mutual support and initiate healing and crisis intervention activities. These activities often are undertaken at great personal sacrifice and they frequently encounter intense and very real opposition from within the community.
2. Another starting point is the program route, in which existing programs and agencies, often frustrated with their inability to affect the scale of the crisis they find themselves dealing with, begin to work closely with other allies in the community to

develop a wider strategy. Often interagency groups are formed and begin planning collaborative interventions and initiatives.

Both starting points lead to similar effects. "Healing" begins to make it onto the community agenda. Core groups begin to form that are oriented around health, healing, sobriety, wellness, etc. and these groups begin to lay the foundation of an alternative reality, often with significant support from outside the community in the early stages. Another key source of support and inspiration at this stage are key elders who have kept the cultural ways alive.

### **What is driving this stage?**

One or more of the following:

- Dedicated key individuals (often women) responding to their awareness that things are bad and there is an alternative.
- Leaders and staff within programs tasked with addressing the consequences of some part of the "crisis".
- Visionary and courageous political leaders within the community creating an "enabling climate for healing". All three are essentially responding to a particular problem (alcohol abuse, suicide, etc.).

### **Community consciousness - how is the nature of the situation perceived?**

- It is often denied at the community level. Those driving the process often view the key tasks as creating awareness of the need for healing and may be largely focused on the outward face of the problem (e.g. "alcohol is what is holding us back").

### **What types of action are being taken?**

- Personal healing and revitalization experiences, formation of informal core groups and networks for mutual support.

### **What are the results and indicators of success?**

- People begin their own healing journeys. A growing number of people seek help for a particular presenting issue or problem. Success/failure is measured in stark terms (drinking vs. not drinking).

### **What are the restraining forces?**

- Restraining forces, often from within the community itself, ranging from denial of the issues to overt and intimidating opposition directed at key individuals.

### **What is being learned?**

- The mechanics of the individual healing journey are being mapped out and modeled.

## **Stage 2: Spring - Gathering Momentum**

*This stage is like a thaw, where significant amounts of energy are released and visible, positive shifts occur. A critical mass seems to have been reached and the trickle becomes a rush as groups of people begin to go through the healing journey together which was pioneered by the key individuals in Stage One. These are frequently exciting. Momentum grows and there is often significant networking, learning and training. The spirit is strong.*

New patterns of organization begin to emerge. A recognizable network oriented around healing begins to develop, which is legitimized by the community, often with political support. The healing process begins to take visible form as programs and organizations. There is often a lot of volunteer energy at this stage, but professional organizations are also beginning to emerge. The way the "problem" is seen also begins to change. There is a gradual shift from a sickness to a wellness model and the focus begins to move from presenting problems to the underlying core issues and traumas.

There is great hope and optimism at this stage. People have the sense that if enough individuals and families can begin the healing journey, then the "problem" will be "solved". Those driving and involved in the process invest huge amounts of time and energy into the community healing movement. There is still opposition but it is generally overshadowed by the enthusiasm of the healing movement.

### **What is driving this stage?**

- A growing awareness of the scope and scale of the problem within the community. The lid has come off the box and it becomes very hard to put it back on. The growing momentum makes it easier for people to "get on board".

### **Community consciousness - what is the nature of the situation?**

- The underlying issues (such as residential school trauma, sexual abuse, etc.) that give rise to the presenting problems become recognized and addressing these "root causes" is accepted as a solution.

### **What types of action are being taken?**

- More and more people are going through treatment and becoming involved in programs, services and healing gatherings, etc.

### **What are the results and indicators of success?**

- Increased numbers of people are on a path of sobriety and wellness. There is a growing sense of hope, momentum and transformed vision. People now believe that community healing is possible.

### **What are the restraining forces?**

- There is also a lack of capacity within the community in terms of services and trained service deliverers. The inability of service providers to work together

effectively, a lack of available resources, absence of or token political support and resistance to healing by groups within the community all push against the momentum that has been built.

### **What is being learned?**

- The process of individual healing becomes more clearly articulated and a recognizable pathway begins to emerge with local relevance for people to follow.

### **Stage 3: Summer - Hitting the Wall**

*At this stage there is the feeling that the healing movement has hit the wall. Front-line workers are often deeply tired, despondent or burned out. The healing process seems to be stalled. While there are many people who have done healing work, there are many more who seem left behind. There is the growing realization that it is not only individuals, but also whole systems that need healing. There may already be some new initiatives in these systems (education, governance, economics, justice, etc.). In some cases these initiatives appear to become institutionalized and to lose the sense of spark and hope that characterized them in Stage Two. In other cases, while awareness has begun to shift, old patterns of working persist for lack of new (and culturally relevant) models and strategies. The honeymoon stage is over as the community begins the difficult work of transforming deeply entrenched patterns and reconstructing a community identity that was forged in oppression and dysfunction.*

There are often a series of paradoxes at Stage Three:

1. Relations with organizations, agencies and forces outside the community are being transformed. There is often far more openness and the prevailing climate has shifted. The availability of outside support is much greater than in the past. At the same time, support and collaboration within the community itself may have actually decreased, as old patterns begin to re-establish themselves and a "healing fatigue" sets in.
2. Just when a significant number of adults seem to have sobered up and regained control over their lives, a new and seemingly worse crisis seems to be breaking out amongst the youth. Youth crime is on the increase. Alcohol use is replaced or augmented by drug use.
3. Many adults seem to have gained new addictive patterns to replace alcohol abuse. Gambling is becoming a serious social issue, along with prescription drug abuse and other self-medicating behaviours. It also becomes apparent that drinking covered up many other things and community secrets begin to emerge. Despite increased sobriety, things actually seem to get worse.
4. To those on the frontlines it may seem as if a lot of people have "dropped out" of the healing movement. Many people don't get involved or show up like they used to. At the same time there may be the emergence of a relatively healthy group of people within the community whose energy is focused on their own lives and the lives of the families. No longer engaging in the "culture of addiction" they would rather spend time on family activities and live their lives than be actively involved in the "culture of recovery".

What appears to have been a wall may in fact be a long plateau. One of the characteristics of a plateau is that not much seems to be happening and you don't seem to be going anywhere, but it is actually where the foundation for all future advances are being laid. On reflection, it is clear that there have been significant gains during this stage. The community norms have shifted; "bad" isn't as bad as it used to be. More people are engaged in positive activities. Capacity is growing within the community as more people access training, education and employment. There is often a cultural and spiritual revitalization that has developed parallel with the healing process, both shaping and being shaped by it.

As Stage Three develops, a new analysis emerges. There is the dawning realization that "healing" alone is not enough and never will be. Healing from the hurts of the past does not build the future. There is growing awareness of the need for decolonization (of thought patterns and structures) and the need to address structural obstacles to development, such as government rules, racism, poverty, etc. The realities of the economy of scale become apparent. There is only so much you can do as a small community to address such things by yourself.

### **What is driving this stage?**

- The organizations and initiatives that have grown out of the previous stage. Healing becomes increasingly institutionalized as professional capacity develops within the community - a key challenge becomes maintaining community participation. Also driving the process (although not necessarily overtly) are the agendas of funding agencies that provide the material support for healing initiatives.

### **Community consciousness - what is the nature of the situation?**

- Complex and competing patterns of analysis emerge and people rarely stop for long enough to take a hard look at the current situation. Feelings of despondency and frustration exist side by side with a realization of progress being made and a nagging question: "Is this as good as it gets?"

### **What types of action are being taken?**

- Specific program initiatives develop and there is increasing control over programs and services that affect community life. Increasing numbers of community members become trained to develop and run initiative and expertise grows.

### **What are the results and indicators of success?**

- There is an increase in community participation in and support for healthy activities.
- The climate has shifted such that negative behaviours (such as public drunkenness, family violence, sexual assault) are no longer tolerated or considered "normal".
- Public policy (i.e. local and government rules and practices) has shifted toward legitimizing healthy standards of behaviour and supporting and enabling healing efforts.
- New programs and services now exist to support individual and family healing.

- More people are seeking out education and training opportunities leading to self-employment.
- There is a greater awareness and acceptance of traditional cultural values and a stronger tendency to incorporate traditional approaches into community initiatives and activities.

### **What are the restraining forces?**

- Few viable models exist for how to work holistically and community agencies are hampered by an inability to work together.
- Funding comes in isolated pockets and may require considerable energy and creativity to harness to the community healing agenda or there may simply be too little funding for too short a period with too onerous a set of strings and reporting requirements attached.
- There is pressure to "produce results" rather than reflect and refine approaches.
- Dealing with the pain and suffering of community members day after day, begins to weigh on front-line workers and key volunteers, draining their energy and vision.
- Political agendas and in some cases corruption and other networks of vested interests, may oppose the momentum for healing.
- Old tensions, conflicts and habits that were put aside during the excitement of Stage Two re-emerge at this stage.
- Momentum and support for healing slows once a dysfunctional stability emerges and once the overt crisis is over.
- New forms of social problems emerge, especially amongst the growing number of youth.

### **What is being learned?**

- There is a great deal of individual learning, training and skill development going on. A key challenge is that learning often does not make the shift to the level of the whole institution because time is not taken to reflect on and apply the considerable learning that has taken place.

## **Stage 4: Fall - From Healing to Transformation**

*In Stage Four a significant change in consciousness takes place. There is a shift from healing as "fixing" to healing as "building" as well as from healing individuals and groups to transforming systems. The sense of ownership for your own systems grows and the skill and capacity to negotiate effective external, reciprocal relationships develop. Healing becomes a strand in the nation-building process. Civil society emerges within communities and the Native community at large and a shift of responsibility begins to take place. The impetus for healing moves from programs and government to civil society.*

The leaders of the healing movement in Stage Two are now entering a new stage in their own lives. They are approaching elderhood and their analysis and vision has matured and deepened. They have shifted their focus from putting out fires to building new and healthy patterns of life and their own families and networks often begin to significantly reflect such new patterns. A search begins for new partnerships, alliances and support for addressing larger scale issues.

### **What is driving this stage?**

- The realization of the limitations of current approaches, the growing participation by community members in the wider economy, the increased interconnection of the Aboriginal community, the shifting macro-political agenda and wider socio-cultural forces (e.g. increased urbanization, youth culture, the Internet, etc.).

### **Community consciousness - what is the nature of the situation?**

- A shift to a systemic analysis and from "healing" to nation building and transformation

### **What types of action are being taken?**

- Networks and alliances with other groups, increased community take-over of programs and services, design and delivery of locally relevant training, conscious modification of mainstream programs to fit local needs.
- Community economic development ventures now being used to partially fund community development initiatives.

### **What are the results and indicators of success?**

- Increased control over and responsibility for the fundamental patterns that shape community life.

### **What are the restraining forces?**

- The scale of ongoing effects of trauma and suffering amongst community members, "siphoning off" of competent leaders into industry and government, political systems that continually maintain division and disunity within communities. Government systems not only haven't caught up with the level of holistic analysis increasingly understood by communities, but existing policies and rules are geared to maintain dependency and external decision making.

### **What is being learned?**

- Learning like healing is constantly evolving and is dependant upon experience. (The story is still unfolding.)

## PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

### Introduction

The foregoing review of lessons learned from the North American Native healing movement guide us to ensure that the following principles are reflected in our healing and wellness work:

1. **Trauma Based**—This means shifting the emphasis of our programs from only addressing and presenting problems (such as alcoholism or abuse) to addressing core healing issues rooted in historical trauma.
2. **Person, Family and Community Healing**—A focus on individual healing and wellness is not enough. The healing of individuals must go hand in hand with the healing and wellness development of their families and communities.
3. **Wholistic Systems Approach**—The mental, physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions of individuals and families, as well as the social, economic, political and cultural dimensions of the community are all part of the web of conditions and relationships that need to be brought to recovery and wellness through our programs.
4. **Healing is Not Enough**—We must also build the capacity of those we serve (and their families and communities) for sustainable wellbeing.
5. **Participation**—Healing, as well as human and community development, comes from within. We cannot heal or fix or develop people. They must do their own healing, learning and growing work. Our role is to support the journey. This implies that the people we target in our programs must be assisted to take responsibility for their own healing and wellness journey. It also implies that the targets of our healing and wellness programs must be active participants in designing, delivering and evaluating our program offerings.
6. **Cultural and Spiritual Foundations**—Healing and wellness requires that those making the journey cannot become whole and balanced without connection to the spiritual foundations of life itself and learning to honour and respect basic principles and values of healthy living reflected in the heart of Indigenous cultures and all true spiritual paths. Without forcing anything on anyone, and while respecting all paths, United Indians healing and wellness programs draw wisdom and strength as well as healing and wellness resources, from the Indigenous cultures of our communities, and make these resources available to people as a part of our program initiatives.
7. **Building Capacity for Healing and Wellness**—Professional therapists and counselors cannot possibly “deliver” healing and wellness to people like packages of pills. There is a key role that people must play themselves, and for this to happen, they will need the support of healthy family and community members. United Indians healing and wellness programs will devote professional time and energy focused on building community capacity to lead and support healing and wellness processes and eventually to create and maintain a community healing movement.

