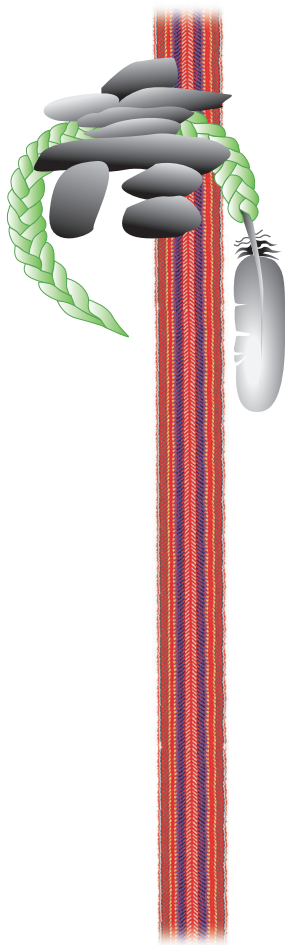


# Healing & Decolonizing

BRIDGING OUR COMMUNITIES TOOLKIT



Legacy of Hope Foundation



## Healing and Decolonization: Bridging Our Communities Toolkit

This Toolkit profiles examples of crisis intervention, healing, and decolonization and develops a set of practical promising healing practices that can be implemented by frontline service providers, and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities seeking to support Survivors and their families. The Toolkit presents the promising healing practices in a manner that makes them accessible and useful and includes other resources for those working to address the legacy of Residential Schools.

Reproduction in whole or in part of this document for personal use and in particular for educational purposes, is authorized, provided the following conditions are respected: non-commercial distribution; respect for the document's integrity (no modifications or alteration of any kind); and a clear acknowledgement of its source as follows: *Source: Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2011.*

© 2011 Legacy of Hope Foundation  
75 Albert Street, Suite 801, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5E7  
T: 613-237-4806, 877-553-7177  
[www.legacyofhope.ca](http://www.legacyofhope.ca)

ISBN 978-0-9733520-4-7

# *Bridging our Communities*

## Acknowledgements

The Legacy of Hope Foundation extends appreciation to those communities, projects, and individuals that welcomed and accommodated Foundation staff who worked on the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project*. In particular, the Foundation wishes to acknowledge the contributions of the following individuals and projects:

- Dale Sharkey, Eskasoni Mental Health and Social Work Service;
- Priscilla Googoo;
- Wagmatcook *Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling Program*;
- Blair Paul and Darlene Anganis, Membertou Wellness Home;
- Larry Grant, *Musqueam Language Program*;
- Rosalind Williams and Deanna Leon-Cook, Splatwin Child Care Centre Society;
- Emiline Kowmuk, *Rankin Inlet Spousal Abuse Counselling Program*;
- Denise Desjarlais, Prairie Spirit Connections Inc.; and
- Andrew Bird and Rosie Parmar, Manitoba Métis Federation.

We also wish to acknowledge the contributions of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation for sharing their expertise on healing approaches and the Aboriginal Corrections Policy Division at Public Safety Canada. Finally, this toolkit would not be possible without the financial support of the Community Programs Directorate of Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch.





# *Bridging our Communities*

## Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	Introduction
<b>2</b>	Background Information
<b>5</b>	How to Use this Toolkit
<b>6</b>	Characteristics of Promising Healing Practices
<b>9</b>	Practical Considerations
<b>10</b>	<i>Promising Healing Practices</i>
<b>30</b>	Charting Promising Healing Practices
<b>32</b>	Promising Healing Practices Chart
<b>36</b>	Operational Challenges
<b>38</b>	<i>Bridging Our Communities Community-based Profiles</i>



# Bridging our Communities

## Introduction

The dramatic and often tragic experiences of generations of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children who attended Residential Schools are well documented. Less commonly acknowledged is the legacy of trauma and cultural alienation inherited by many of the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of Residential School Survivors. It is now recognized that former Indian Residential School students and their families need emotional and cultural support and professional counselling. There is a pressing need for crisis intervention, healing, and decolonizing programs within First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities.

In 2009, the Legacy of Hope Foundation (LHF) undertook the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project*. The fieldwork and gathering of data about promising healing practices and community-based initiatives took place in 2009. The analysis and assembly of the toolkit took place in 2010. The effort has been to profile outstanding examples of crisis intervention, healing, and decolonization and to develop an extensive set of practical promising healing practices that can be implemented by Resolution Health Support Workers (RHSW), other frontline service providers, and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities who are working to support Survivors and their families.

This toolkit presents 41 promising healing practices in a manner that makes them accessible and useful. The toolkit offers a straightforward method to identify potentially useful — or promising — practices for promoting healing and decolonization. A comprehensive directory of existing resources and programs that promote healing and decolonization, and address the legacy of the Indian Residential Schools is also included in this resource.

The goal of the toolkit is to:

1. Promote ways to enhance local healing and decolonization programs and initiatives.
2. Promote the coordination of promising practices for healing and decolonization among programs and initiatives.
3. Promote greater dialogue on the topic of healing and decolonizing practices.
4. Provide tools for community service providers to address and deal with the legacy of Residential Schools in First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities.
5. Complement Health Canada's *Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program*.
6. Provide a comprehensive directory of national, provincial, and local programs, services, and other resources available for addressing the legacy of Residential Schools.

# Bridging our Communities

## Background Information

### Legacy of Hope Foundation

The Legacy of Hope Foundation was created over a decade ago by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) as a national charitable organization. Its mandate is to educate and create awareness and understanding about the legacy of Residential Schools, including the effects and intergenerational impacts on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, and to continue to support the ongoing healing process of Residential School Survivors.

The Legacy of Hope Foundation has set out to develop an extensive range of educational programs, resources, and materials on Residential Schools. These include:

- *Where are the Children?* - Healing the Legacy of the Residential Schools Photo Exhibition;
- *Where are the Children?* Virtual Exhibition - Online interactive educational resource (see [www.wherethechildren.ca](http://www.wherethechildren.ca) and [www.lesenfantsdevenus.ca](http://www.lesenfantsdevenus.ca)).
- *Our Stories... Our Strength* - Oral history collection of Residential School Survivors' testimony;
- "*We were so far away...*": The Inuit Experience of Residential Schools exhibition;
- *Bridging Our Communities*, a research project on promising practices in healing and decolonization.
- 100 years of Loss-Exhibition, workshop series and Edu-kit curriculum resource.

### About the Bridging Our Communities Research Project

Building on research conducted by the AHF in the area of promising healing practices and healing the legacy of the Residential Schools, the LHF undertook the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project* in 2009.<sup>1</sup> The project was undertaken in partnership with the Aboriginal Corrections Policy Unit of Public Safety Canada, the Community Programs Directorate of Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, and various Aboriginal organizations and communities. The intent was to gather and share knowledge about healing and decolonization efforts within First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities. The research project included community-based initiatives from across Canada located in urban, rural, and remote areas and projects involving Elders, children, youth, parents, men, and women. A total of ten initiatives were examined in detail and their promising healing practices were identified.

<sup>1</sup> See: Aboriginal Healing Foundation (2006). Final Report of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (M. Brant Castellano, Volume I: A Healing Journey, Reclaiming Wellness (<http://www.ahf.ca/downloads/final-report-vol-1.pdf>); Kishk Anaquot Health Research, Volume II: Measuring Progress, Program Evaluation (<http://www.ahf.ca/downloads/final-report-vol-2.pdf>); and L. Archibald, Volume III: Promising Healing Practices in Aboriginal Communities (<http://www.ahf.ca/downloads/final-report-vol-3.pdf>). Ottawa, ON: Aboriginal Healing Foundation.



The ten participating *Bridging Our Communities* initiatives are:

1. *Community Therapeutic Healing Program*, Eskasoni Mental Health and Social Work Service, Eskasoni, Nova Scotia;
2. *Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling Program*, Wagmatcook, Nova Scotia;
3. *Membertou Wellness Home*, Membertou First Nation, Sydney, Nova Scotia;
4. *Musqueam Language Program*, Musqueam First Nation, British Columbia;
5. *Cultural Program*, Splatsin Child Care and Learning Centre, Enderby, British Columbia;
6. *Tending the Fire Leadership Program*, Prairie Spirit Connections Inc., Regina, Saskatchewan;
7. *Rankin Inlet Spousal Abuse Counselling Program*, Pulaarvik Kablu Friendship Centre, Rankin Inlet, Nunavut;
8. *Neah Kee Papa Program*, Manitoba Métis Federation, Winnipeg, Manitoba;
9. *Family Art Therapy Program*, Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, Ottawa, Ontario; and
10. *Youth Violence Prevention Toolkit*, Native Women's Association of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario.

Collectively, the community-based healing initiatives that participated in the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project* are part of a decolonizing force that supports and amplifies individual and community healing. Individually, the projects offer concrete examples of successful programs, services, and activities that may be of interest to other Aboriginal communities seeking to advance their own healing and decolonization efforts.

For the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project*, the terms **healing** and **decolonization** refer to actions aimed at undoing the harm inflicted on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis by the Residential School system and other colonizing processes. Healing programs may include support services for substance addiction, violence and suicide intervention, various forms of counselling, healing ceremonies, western therapies, and mental health and wellness promotion. Decolonization programs support and restore traditional languages, values, customs, and ceremonies and work to rebuild healthy relationships.


This toolkit has been created to offer service providers and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities in general, information on promising practices for healing and decolonizing. The information in this toolkit can be used to develop new programs and services in communities, to enhance existing programs and services, or can be used to stimulate dialogue within a community about unresolved trauma and the need to plan healing and decolonizing initiatives.

No two Aboriginal communities are the same. A community's culture, its past, the strength of its traditions and language, its urban, rural, or remote location, the extent to which it has access to traditional lands and resources, its social, economic, political, and land claim status, and its access to financial resources are all factors that influence a community's capacity to heal — they are all factors that dictate the needs, the design, and the operation of a healing program. It is important to look for promising healing practices and program models that best meet the needs of your community.

We encourage community service providers to use the resources provided in this toolkit to create new programs and strengthen existing programs.

### Methodological Considerations

The LHF consulted with a number of organizations, agencies, and government departments to identify programs and communities that reflect the diversity of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in Canada and the different approaches to healing and decolonization. As a result, a total of ten community-based initiatives were invited to participate in the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project*. A LHF researcher conducted site visits and semi-structured interviews with the coordinators and staff of the participating initiatives and an initial total of 36 unique promising healing practices were identified. Importantly, it was the service providers of the participating initiatives who identified what they thought were the promising healing practices of their project. The results of the research, therefore, reflect First Nations, Inuit, and Métis interests and worldviews and are grounded in practical experience.



An effort was later made to further verify the identification of promising healing practices and to develop ways to make them more operational. In late November 2009, representatives from each of the ten original *Bridging Our Communities* community-based initiatives were invited to Ottawa, Ontario for the *Bridging Our Communities' National Gathering on Promising Practices for Healing and Decolonization*. The gathering served as an opportunity to further verify and validate the research findings. During the event representatives discussed, affirmed, and/or rejected each of the promising healing practices. In addition, the representatives suggested an additional five promising healing practices — bringing the final total to 41 practices — and considered ways to organize them into useful categories or themes. These categories are key to this toolkit. Overall, the exercise allowed the communities to contribute to the project's final analysis.

# Bridging our Communities

## How to Use this Toolkit

This toolkit is intended to help service providers to address the unresolved trauma and legacy of the Residential Schools within First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities. The toolkit contains the following information:

1. A listing of 41 promising healing practices that were developed with the participation of ten community-based initiatives during the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project*.
2. A chart that organizes and cross-references the promising healing practices in terms of:
  - Their source project name and location;
  - Six characteristics of a promising healing practice; and
  - Eight practical or operational factors relevant to implementation.
3. Brief descriptions of the ten community-based initiatives that participated in the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project*. These serve to illustrate the use of the promising healing practices.
4. A listing of potential challenges that should be considered when designing, implementing, and operating healing or decolonizing initiatives.
5. A wall poster that provides an alphabetical listing of all the *Bridging Our Communities* promising healing practices.
6. A directory of national, provincial, and local programs, services, and resources — with Internet hyperlinks to online information — that may be relevant to service providers.
7. An Evaluation Form to allow toolkit users to provide the LHF with comments and feedback on how to improve this resource.
8. A DVD with supplementary resources.

It is hoped this toolkit can be used easily to identify promising healing practices that are of value for existing community-based healing projects and initiatives or those in the planning stages. The practices can be identified according to different dimensions of healing and decolonization or in terms of practical operational concerns. A description of each practice's healing and operational value is presented and ten case studies from the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project* serve to illustrate in operational terms the promising healing practices.



# Bridging our Communities

## Characteristics of Promising Healing Practices

The promising healing practices presented in this toolkit have been organized according to six characteristics. These provide a useful way to identify those practices that may be relevant to your own project or initiative

Figure 1: Framework for Understanding Trauma and Healing

<b>THE NEED FOR HEALING</b> Historic Trauma and the Legacy of the Residential School System		
<b>CONDITIONS NECESSARY TO HEALING</b>		
1. Aboriginal Values and Worldviews	2. Personal and Cultural Safety	3. Capacity to Heal
Values and guiding principles that reflect an Aboriginal worldview.	A healing environment that is personally and culturally safe.	A capacity to heal represented by skilled healers and healing teams.
<b>THE THREE PILLARS OF HEALING</b>		
4. Reclaiming History	5. Cultural Interventions	6. Therapeutic Healing
Historical component including education about Residential Schools and their impacts.	Process of decolonization.	A diverse range and combination of traditional and contemporary therapeutic interventions.
<b>CONTEXT</b> Individual and community resources, strengths, and challenges.		
<small>* Adapted from L. Archibald (2006). Volume III: Promising Healing Practices in Aboriginal Communities. Final Report of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Ottawa, ON: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, page 18. (<a href="http://www.ahf.ca/downloads/final-report-vol-3.pdf">http://www.ahf.ca/downloads/final-report-vol-3.pdf</a>)</small>		



The concept of a promising healing practice was first developed by the AHF to describe models, approaches, initiatives, and techniques that are relevant to individuals and communities healing from the trauma of the Residential School experience. In order to better understand a successful healing project, the AHF conducted a survey of more than one hundred projects to identify those practices that contribute to healing and a project's success.<sup>2</sup> Like a "best practice," promising healing practices encourage learning, information sharing, innovation, and adaptation to other settings. However, unlike a "best practice" they do not imply that only one practice or approach will succeed or that one practice is better than another. The AHF identified six characteristics shared by many promising healing practices:

1. Values and guiding principles that reflect an Aboriginal worldview;
2. A healing environment that is personally and culturally safe;
3. A capacity to heal represented by skilled healers and healing teams;
4. An historical component, including education about Residential Schools and their impacts;
5. Cultural interventions and activities; and
6. A diverse range and combination of traditional and contemporary therapeutic interventions.

Figure 1 illustrates how each characteristic relates to the others. The first three characteristics establish the conditions necessary for healing and the last three are the components or pillars of a holistic healing initiative. At the base is the individual and community context that influence the need and chances of success for healing. Healing must be placed in the context of an individual's experiences, strengths, resources, motivations, and relationships within the family. At the community level, relevant factors may include culture, traditions, language, history, resources, and the community's social, political, geographic, and economic conditions. Additionally, the extent to which community leaders are committed to healing, and the community's capacity and access to skilled healers and therapists also are important.

These six characteristics are not mutually exclusive. A promising healing practice can have more than one characteristic that lends itself to healing.

<sup>2</sup> See: L. Archibald (2006). Volume III: Promising Healing Practices in Aboriginal Communities. Final Report of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Ottawa, ON: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, page 18. (<http://www.ahf.ca/downloads/final-report-vol-3.pdf>)

### Promising Healing Practices or Best Practices?

The idea of a healing practice is based on the business and industry concept of a “best practice.” Innovative practices tend to spread throughout a field or industry after experience shows they are successful, reliable, transferable, and adaptable. The sharing of best practices can provide information about new possibilities, can lead to improved practices and outcomes, greater networking, and can reduce the need to “reinvent the wheel.”

# Bridging our Communities

## Practical Considerations

The promising healing practices presented in this toolkit have been organized according to eight practical or operational factors. The intent is to help you to identify those practices — and their originating projects — that will strengthen your own healing initiatives or help you to design and implement a new project that results in positive changes in the lives of community members.

The practical considerations fall into three broad categories and eight sub-categories:

### Service Providers and Agencies:

- **Program Design and Operation:** Practices that relate to the design and operation of a project, to project management, and to other management and operational considerations.
- **Staff and Counsellors:** Practices related to the recruitment, skills, activities, and support of project personnel.

### Program Activities:

- **Community Engagement and Outreach:** Practices directed towards engaging community members, Survivors, children or youth, and others in the healing program or initiative.
- **Traditional and Contemporary Healing:** Practices that relate to different healing practices and techniques.
- **Culture and Language:** Practices that have strong cultural and heritage components. These can be related to the decolonization process or practices that nurture cultural identity and pride.

### Program Audience or Clientele:

- **Parents:** Promising healing practices that are relevant to programs and projects that target or engage parents.
- **Children and Youth:** Practices that are directed towards children and youth. These may involve, for example, cultural activities, language, outreach, or use of new media techniques.
- **Gender Specific:** Practices that in some way engage or target men or women.

These practical or operational considerations are not mutually exclusive. The *Culture Program* operated by the Splatsin Child Care and Learning Centre (Splatsin Tsm7aksaltn Society), for example, identifies cultural and developmental child and youth programming as a promising healing practice. In terms of practical considerations, this activity falls within two broad categories: program activities —specifically culture and language, and program audience or clientele — specifically children and youth.



# Promising Healing Practices





Below is an alphabetical list and description of the 41 promising healing practices identified by the LHF *Bridging Our Communities Research Project*. Additional information is provided with each entry about:

1. The specific operational relevance of the practice;
2. The healing characteristics of the practice; and
3. The participating *Bridging Our Communities* community-based initiatives that identified and exemplified the implementation of the promising healing practice.

## Aboriginal Community-based Models of Mental Health Delivery

---

Investing in local skills development encourages personal commitment and allegiance by staff to the community. As a condition for healing, this promotes personal and cultural safety and builds skills and capacity within the community. Community members may speak an Aboriginal language and offer first-hand knowledge of their community, including its history, culture, strengths, dynamics, and problems. This facilitates culturally appropriate service delivery which is less likely to be viewed as a threat by clients. As an example, the success of the Community Therapeutic Services provided by the Eskasoni Mental Health and Social Work Service rested, in part, on a community-based model that employed community members. The service responded to the needs of Survivors in a manner that respected, fostered, and enhanced Mi'kmaw culture, language, and spirituality. This practice is important to service providers and agencies in terms of program design and operation and in terms of potential staff members and counsellors.

### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Aboriginal values and worldviews
- Personal and cultural safety
- Capacity to heal

### Community-based Example:

- *Community Therapeutic Healing Program*, Eskasoni Mental Health and Social Work Service, Eskasoni, NS (see page 39).

## Academic Partnerships

---

Formal academic partnerships promote respect and maintain the intellectual property rights of Aboriginal communities. These partnerships can ensure that language revitalization initiatives incorporate quality linguistic knowledge and expertise. In light of a cultural methodology for language teaching and learning, formal partnerships can protect against the misappropriation of cultural knowledge and oral traditions. As an example, the Musqueam First Nation's Language Program has a formal partnership with the University of British Columbia's First Nations Languages Program. Together they offer university-accredited classes that focus on the linguistics of the hən̓q̓m̓iṇ̓əm language. The classes include demonstrations of traditional activities as well as standard university instruction techniques. The partnership builds community expertise and protects cultural knowledge and traditions. Formal academic partnerships are relevant in terms of program design and operation.

### Healing Characteristic Associated with the Practice:

- Aboriginal values and worldviews

### Community-based Example:

- *Musqueam Language Program*, Musqueam First Nation, BC (see page 41).

## Art Therapy

---

Art therapy provides Aboriginal clients with an innovative and effective forum for self-exploration and healing where strong emotions can be safely released and difficult, painful, or confusing issues can be approached in a gentle, indirect way. Non-verbal therapies allow people to work on issues without having to put their thoughts and feelings into words until they are ready. The Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health recently facilitated a 12-week *Child and Family Art Project* that was designed to help children and families to heal from the intergenerational impacts of Residential School abuse. Aboriginal traditions of art making and the process of contemporary art therapy provided a means for self-expression and access to personal wisdom within a family-like atmosphere that fostered relationships of trust and a sense of belonging for urban Aboriginal families at risk. The practice of art therapy proved to be relevant in terms of blending traditional and contemporary healing.

### Healing Characteristic Associated with the Practice:

- Therapeutic healing

### Community-based Example:

- *Family Art Therapy Program*, Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, Ottawa, ON (see page 46).

## Balance Local and External Counselling Services

---

Aboriginal communities can offer expertise and services to neighbouring communities, filling gaps in community services and infrastructure. Service delivery is strengthened and enhanced by building partnerships, fostering relationships, and maintaining communication with service providers in surrounding Aboriginal communities. In small communities with close family ties and networks, concerns over privacy, confidentiality, and the potential for a conflict of interest can be reduced. As a promising practice, community partnerships promote an environment of personal and cultural safety and, in turn, can facilitate community outreach, trust, and relationship building. Both the Wagmatcook *Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling Program* and the Membertou *Wellness Home* illustrate this program design and staffing option. For the former, a mobile clinical therapist from Eskasoni is available to provide counselling, therapy, and group services. Similarly, counsellors from Eskasoni travel to Membertou to work with Survivors on a more private basis. This practice is relevant to service providers and agencies in the context of program design and operation, and in terms of potential staff and counsellors.

### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Aboriginal values and worldviews
- Personal and cultural safety
- Capacity to heal
- Therapeutic healing

### Community-based Examples:

- *Membertou Wellness Home*, Membertou First Nation, Sydney, NS (see page 40).
- *Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling Program*, Wagmatcook, NS (see page 40).



## Balancing Cultural Approach

---

Where appropriate, particularly in urban Aboriginal communities, culturally appropriate programming must be balanced to meet the specific needs of clients. This may require a more multicultural perspective. It may be necessary to modify the cultural orientation of group programs and services in order to bridge the various cultures within the group or urban community. The Winnipeg-based *Neah Kee Papa Program* offered by the Manitoba Métis Federation illustrates a program that is designed to benefit both Métis and non-Métis fathers. The parenting enhancement program uses traditional knowledge to help fathers learn their traditional roles as well as tools for effective communication and anger management. Programming is adjusted to meet the differing cultural backgrounds of program participants. The need to balance cultural approaches is relevant to service providers and agencies in terms of program design and operation.

### Healing Characteristic Associated with the Practice:

- Aboriginal values and worldviews

### Community-based Example:

- *Neah Kee Papa Program*, Manitoba Métis Federation, Winnipeg, MB (see page 45).

## Benefits and Support for Frontline Workers

---

Providing staff with adequate support to deal with vicarious trauma and excessive levels of stress is important in maintaining staff well-being and retention, and overall quality of community services. Counselling, comprehensive health benefits, debriefing sessions, and support systems contribute to the quality and consistency of community healing services. This is especially important in small rural or remote communities where issues of staff recruitment and retention are critical. Support for staff contributes to a program or initiative's capacity to heal. As an example, the *Rankin Inlet Spousal Abuse Counselling Program* schedules weekly debriefings with counsellors and other colleagues working as victim services officers and community outreach workers. The sessions help staff to deal with occupational stress and vicarious trauma. They provide an opportunity to discuss difficult clients, share important client information, receive and provide moral support and encouragement, share food, play games, and laugh. This practice applies to the concerns of service providers and agencies and the recruitment and support of project staff and counsellors.

### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Personal and cultural safety
- Capacity to heal

### Community-based Example:

- *Rankin Inlet Spousal Abuse Counselling Program*, Pulaarvik Kablu Friendship Centre, Rankin Inlet, NU (see page 44).

## Community Language Retention Programming

---

Developing Aboriginal language curriculum and providing it to local schools and programs helps regenerate and retain culture and identity for Aboriginal people. Both the Splatshin and Musqueam First Nations of British Columbia have language initiatives that target preschool and school-age children. The cultural program of the Splatshin Tsm7aksaltn Society engages Kia7as (Grandmothers) as part of a Secwepemc language program for babies and toddlers. Half of the Grandmothers are Survivors and they find the program very therapeutic and meaningful. Many of the children are intergenerationally impacted by the Residential Schools. Learning,

acquiring, and demonstrating fluency in an Aboriginal language can contribute to positive self-esteem and may contribute to community well-being and to cultural continuity. The Musqueam First Nation has developed a university-accredited language program and has published seven language books for adults and youth, three illustrated storybooks, and special audio recordings for hən̓q̓əmin̓əm learners. Language retention is a promising practice relevant to programs that promote activities related to culture and language.

#### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Aboriginal values and worldviews
- Cultural interventions

#### Community-based Examples:

- *Musqueam Language Program*, Musqueam First Nation, BC (see page 41).
- *Cultural Program*, Splantsin Child Care and Learning Centre, Enderby, BC (see page 42).

## Community Outreach, Events, and Workshops

---

Hosting events and workshops brings community members together to engage in dialogue about healing, education, business, and community development. These information events can reach and recruit potential clients who may not normally participate in a healing program. In terms of promising healing practices, community events can contribute to decolonization and establish the cultural and personal safety that will attract clients to seek support and healing. The Eskasoni Mental Health and Social Work Service Community Therapeutic Services utilized such social media as chat lines, Facebook, and MSN chat as a form of youth outreach. The centerpiece of the *Youth Violence Prevention Toolkit* developed by the Youth Council of the Native Women's Association of Canada is a workshop designed to be delivered interactively in a variety of creative ways with room for flexibility. The toolkit serves to raise awareness about how violence impacts youth. These activities reflect a promising practice that emphasizes community engagement and outreach.

#### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Personal and cultural safety
- Cultural interventions

#### Community-based Examples:

- *Community Therapeutic Healing Program*, Eskasoni Mental Health and Social Work Service, Eskasoni, NS (see page 39).
- *Youth Violence Prevention Toolkit*, Native Women's Association of Canada, Ottawa, ON (see page 47).

## Community Steering Committees and Working Groups

---

Community members possess first-hand knowledge of community issues and needs, making their involvement, feedback, and expertise integral to the development of effective, relevant programs and services. Project working groups and/or committees that include community members will ensure Aboriginal values and worldviews are understood and incorporated into the program or service. As well, encouraging the participation of community members builds community capacity. These contribute to the necessary conditions for healing. The *Rankin Inlet Spousal Abuse Counselling Program*, for example, was adapted by a community-led working group using a program originating in Whitehorse, Yukon. Community involvement, especially by Elders, has contributed to the program's success — from program design and implementation to delivery. Similarly, the Wagmatcook's *Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling Program* participates in a local steering committee that is composed of community RCMP officers, social workers, and frontline workers with the mandate to develop ways to help the

community heal from suicide, substance misuse, and abuse. This promotes community-based and collaborative programs that better meet community needs. The practice of using steering committees and networks is useful to service providers and agencies in terms of program design and operations and in terms of community engagement and outreach.

#### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Aboriginal values and worldviews
- Personal and cultural safety
- Capacity to heal

#### Community-based Examples:

- *Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling Program*, Wagmatcook, NS (see page 40).
- *Rankin Inlet Spousal Abuse Counselling Program*, Pulaarvik Kablu Friendship Centre, Rankin Inlet, NU (see page 44).

## Community Toolkit Implementation Training

---

The Native Women's Association of Canada recognized the need to provide trained crisis intervention staff during workshops and information sessions that address Residential Schools and colonization and the impact on individuals and communities. A skilled healing team is needed to help those who become emotionally overwhelmed. The association's *Youth Violence Prevention Toolkit* involves the presentation of community workshops and the need to have support crisis intervention staff as part of a workshop's implementation. This practice is an important consideration with respect to a program or initiative's complement of staff and counsellors.

#### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Aboriginal values and worldviews
- Capacity to heal

#### Community-based Example:

- *Youth Violence Prevention Toolkit*, Native Women's Association of Canada, Ottawa, ON (see page 47).

## Community-based Toolkits and Workshops

---

There are a number of Aboriginal health and wellness toolkits available to Aboriginal communities to help them to engage communities in proactive dialogue, awareness, and action on healing and decolonization. The Native Women's Association of Canada encourages community-based events as a way to reach and recruit potential clients who would not normally participate in a healing program. In terms of promising healing practices, community-based workshops are a form of community engagement and outreach that establishes cultural and personal safety.

#### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Personal and cultural safety
- Cultural interventions

#### Community-based Example:

- *Youth Violence Prevention Toolkit*, Native Women's Association of Canada, Ottawa, ON (see page 47).

## Comprehensive Program Planning and Measurements

---

Community needs assessment facilitates the development of clearly articulated, relevant program goals and supports program planning. Measurement at the onset of programming and at regular points throughout the implementation process will help to identify problems and obstacles early enough to make any necessary changes. Participants at the *Bridging Our Communities' National Gathering on Promising Practices for Healing and Decolonization* identified the importance of establishing program planning and measurement standards during the program design and implementation phase of projects. This is an important consideration for service providers and agencies. The practice is less relevant in terms of the healing characteristics of promising healing practices.

### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- n/a

### Community-based Examples:

- n/a

## Cultural and Developmental Child and Youth Programming

---

Providing children with a head start on education and development helps to prevent future school dropout and increases the likelihood of higher educational achievement. Combined exposure to developmental and Aboriginal programming during the early stages of education helps to establish and nurture an Aboriginal identity and worldview. This can be achieved by bringing children and Elders together to learn and practice language, ceremonies, and culture. Targeted activities and programming that have cultural components build and reinforce self-worth, self-esteem, confidence, and mental and physical health and well-being. For example, the cultural program of the Splatsin Tsm7aksaltn Society regularly brings Elders (Grandmothers) and young children together to preserve and promote culture and language. Children learn to speak their traditional language and learn about cultural practices and concepts. For the Elders who are Survivors, many find the program very therapeutic and meaningful, a conduit for healing. In practical terms, this healing practice is an important consideration for programs that target children and youth and promote culture and language.

### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Aboriginal values and worldviews
- Cultural interventions

### Community-based Example:

- *Cultural Program*, Splatsin Child Care and Learning Centre, Enderby, BC (see page 42).

## Cultural Methodology for Language Teaching and Learning

---

The university level language classes emphasize a cultural and holistic approach that includes an interactive format of plays, word games, and demonstrations of traditional activities. This benefits Aboriginal students in terms of decolonization and promoting an Aboriginal worldview. The cultural methodology encourages a holistic mentality and way of being. Among non-Aboriginal students, the methodology enlightens and educates students about the Aboriginal experience. This practice is best illustrated through the *Musqueam Language Program*. Musqueam students are given the opportunity to learn through their language the concepts that define their spiritual and cultural identity and this contributes to the process of decolonization. The band also has published language books for adults and youth, three illustrated storybooks, audio recordings for hən̓q̓əmin̓əm learners, and

offers preschooler language classes. The practice is relevant to service providers and agencies in terms of program design and operation and with respect to activities that are directed towards culture and language.

**Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:**

- Aboriginal values and worldviews
- Cultural interventions

**Community-based Example:**

- *Musqueam Language Program*, Musqueam First Nation, BC (see page 41).

## Cultural Programs and Activities

---

Cultural youth programming is an alternative and preventative measure to substance misuse, while promoting and facilitating cultural practices and identity. Culture camps, for example, can facilitate the process of decolonization. The Wagmatcook *Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling Program's* Moose Camp is an example of a cultural intervention that allows youth to learn traditional skills. The activities help to restore practices and values lost by many as a result of the Residential School experience and colonization. The practice is a valuable program activity that promotes culture and language and targets children and youth.

**Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:**

- Personal and cultural safety
- Cultural interventions

**Community-based Example:**

- *Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling Program*, Wagmatcook, NS (see page 40).

## Culturally Appropriate and Culture-Specific Approach

---

Healing programs need to be culturally appropriate and program staff need to be culturally aware. Program activities should be tailored to the needs of the Aboriginal community. Meaningful Aboriginal values and worldviews are a condition for healing, as is the need for staff to understand and promote an environment that is culturally safe. For example, the cultural foundation of the Prairie Spirit Connections *Tending the Fire Leadership Program* is the basis for its success. The program creates a safe, positive environment where Aboriginal men can deal with the root causes of their problem behaviour and strengthen their families. This is done using traditional teachings and cultural activities that help men to accept responsibility for their actions, to find their identity, and to work with their families. This practice is important to service providers and agencies in terms of a program's design and operation.

**Healing Characteristic Associated with the Practice:**

- Aboriginal values and worldviews

**Community-based Example:**

- *Tending the Fire Leadership Program*, Prairie Spirit Connections Inc., Regina, SK (see page 43).





## Culturally Appropriate Community Information Materials

---

Providing practical, functional, and plain-language information materials that use cultural imagery within a local context is an effective way to engage Aboriginal communities. The practice helps to incorporate Aboriginal worldviews and values and promotes a healing environment that is culturally safe. This helps to establish the necessary conditions for healing. *The Youth Violence Prevention Toolkit* prepared by the Native Women's Association of Canada is designed to be modified to be culturally relevant in each community. For example, the preparation of community-specific fact sheets on the Residential School experience, the participation of Elders, and culturally appropriate activities such as smudging and healing circles are encouraged. The practice of using culturally and community-appropriate material is particularly relevant in terms of community engagement and outreach.

### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Aboriginal values and worldviews
- Personal and cultural safety

### Community-based Example:

- *Youth Violence Prevention Toolkit*, Native Women's Association of Canada, Ottawa, ON (see page 47).

## Culturally Appropriate Parenting Education

---

Culturally appropriate methods are an important element of parenting programs in order to offer a safe environment within which to remedy gaps in good parenting and extended family relationships, and to restore family traditions lost as a result of the Residential School experience. Effective parenting programs address the specific issues and needs of each parent while offering a forum for both to share and exchange their thoughts, ideas, and values about parenting. The clients' Aboriginal identity as parents should be nourished and supported. As an example, the Eskasoni Mental Health and Social Work Service offered a parenting program as an outreach service. It served as a stepping stone for families to learn about, and to begin using counselling, therapy, and other healing services. Interventions were rooted in the community and the Mi'kmaw worldview. This healing practice is relevant to programs and services that seek to target their activities towards parents.

### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Personal and cultural safety
- Cultural interventions
- Therapeutic healing

### Community-based Example:

- *Community Therapeutic Healing Program*, Eskasoni Mental Health and Social Work Service, Eskasoni, NS (see page 39).





## Economic Opportunity and Development

---

Successful economic development enhances community infrastructure, provides jobs, and enables the creation and maintenance of services that better meet the needs of the community. For the Membertou First Nation, success has been achieved within a worldview that recognizes and respects Mi'kmaw heritage and culture. The values of conservation and sustainability are part of the economic development model adopted by the community. Through both tradition and innovation, the community has built the capacity for successful economic development. The practice is relevant to service providers and agencies in terms of program design and operation.

### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- n/a

### Community-based Example:

- *Membertou Wellness Home*, Membertou First Nation, Sydney, NS (see page 40).

## Elder and Extended Family Involvement

---

The participation of Elders and extended family members during cultural activities is encouraged to foster the traditional concept of the family. Family members can share traditional knowledge and teachings, and this support contributes to decolonization and healing. As a promising practice, the participation of Elders and other extended family members helps to incorporate Aboriginal values and worldviews into programming, promotes a culturally safe environment for healing, and contributes to the process of decolonization. As an example, the *Family Art Therapy Program* offered by the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health encouraged both Elders and extended family members to participate in activities that combined the Aboriginal traditions of art making and the process of contemporary art therapy. The program helped children and families heal from the intergenerational impacts of Residential School abuse. The participation of Elders and other family members helped foster the traditional concept of the family. As a healing practice, the engagement of Elders and extended family members is relevant to activities that involve community engagement and outreach, and culture and language.

### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Aboriginal values and worldviews
- Personal and cultural safety
- Cultural interventions

### Community-based Example:

- *Family Art Therapy Program*, Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, Ottawa, ON (see page 46).



## Elder Involvement

---

In the case of many Aboriginal peoples, Elder involvement is a traditional practice that helps preserve cultural knowledge and awareness. Elders have wisdom, traditional knowledge, and life experience that contribute greatly to cultural identity. Involving Elders in an ongoing and consistent capacity fosters this traditional practice of knowledge sharing and mentoring, and positively expands community dynamics. The Splatsin Tsm7aksaltn Society involves Elders (Grandmothers) in their language program for infants and toddlers. The Elders are the last speakers of the Secwepemc language. In Rankin Inlet, Inuit Elders have trained to provide guidance and counselling and volunteer to help participants complete the spousal abuse counselling program. The urban-based *Tending the Fire Leadership Program* in Regina and the Wabano Centre's *Family Art Therapy Program* in Ottawa also encourage the participation of Elders in the healing activities. The practice of Elder involvement is an important consideration during program design, and when planning to blend traditional and contemporary healing, or developing program activities geared towards language and culture.

### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Aboriginal values and worldviews
- Capacity to heal
- Cultural interventions

### Community-based Examples:

- *Cultural Program*, Splatsin Child Care and Learning Centre, Enderby, BC (see page 42).
- *Tending the Fire Leadership Program*, Prairie Spirit Connections Inc., Regina, SK (see page 43).
- *Rankin Inlet Spousal Abuse Counselling Program*, Pulaarvik Kablu Friendship Centre, Rankin Inlet, NU (see page 44).
- *Family Art Therapy Program*, Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, Ottawa, ON (see page 46).

## Establish a Supportive and Non-Judgmental Environment

---

Ensure the program process, staff, and environment are always supportive, encouraging, and non-judgmental. This practice promotes a personally safe environment which is a necessary condition for healing. Wabano Centre's *Family Art Therapy Program*, for example, establishes a family-like environment that fosters trust and a sense of belonging during the program's art-making sessions. As a promising practice, this strategy is important in the context of program design and operation.

### Healing Characteristic Associated with the Practice:

- Personal and cultural safety

### Community-based Example:

- *Family Art Therapy Program*, Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, Ottawa, ON (see page 46).



## Fundraising Framework and Action Plan

---

Identifying an individual, or team, responsible for developing and implementing an annual or multi-year funding and fundraising plan ensures that an agency's capacity is adequately supported to meet the needs of the community. This practice is relevant in the context of program design and its ongoing operation. It was recommended during the *Bridging Our Communities' National Gathering on Promising Practices for Healing and Decolonization*.

### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- n/a

### Community-based Examples:

- n/a

## Gender-Specific Parenting Programs

---

Gender-specific parenting programs help parents to understand and restore their role and rights within an Aboriginal family. Culturally appropriate methods for enhancing parenting skills can reinforce Aboriginal values and help to restore Aboriginal identity among parents. Notably, the Manitoba Métis Federation found there were programs for young mothers but there were none available for young fathers. As a result, the *Neah Kee Papa Program* was established as a parenting enhancement program designed to support the well-being of children and to strengthen the parenting role of fathers. This practice is relevant in the context of targeted programming and more specifically, in terms of gender-specific activities.

### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Aboriginal values and worldviews
- Cultural interventions

### Community-based Example:

- *Neah Kee Papa Program*, Manitoba Métis Federation, Winnipeg, MB (see page 45).

## Infuse Modern Therapy with Culturally Appropriate Approach

---

Explore ways to use western and modern therapies that complement Aboriginal culture, such as art therapy, with Aboriginal cultural approaches, activities, and concepts. A complementary healing team can promote Aboriginal values and worldviews, promote a culturally safe environment for healing, and can contribute to the process of decolonization. Wabano Centre's *Family Art Therapy Program* illustrates the blending of traditional and contemporary techniques in a program that targets children and families intergenerationally impacted by Residential School abuse. The practice is valuable in terms of program activities that seek to blend traditional and contemporary healing and promote culture and language.

### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Aboriginal values and worldviews
- Personal and cultural safety
- Capacity to heal
- Cultural interventions
- Therapeutic healing

### Community-based Example:

- *Family Art Therapy Program*, Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, Ottawa, ON (see page 46).

## Invest in Community Skills and Expertise Development

---

Engaging community members in language programming builds community capacity and expertise. Aboriginal communities benefit from local expertise in a specialized field such as linguistics. This knowledge and capacity contribute to the process of decolonization. The Musqueam First Nation's university-level language program, for example, provides community members with academic expertise in hənqəmihəm language vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, literacy, and conversational fluency. This benefits the skills and capacity of band employees. For example, some teachers who work at the community's preschool are enrolled in, or have completed, the language classes. As a promising practice, the investment in skills and expertise offers multiple practical and operational considerations. For service providers and agencies, the practice is important in terms of program design and operation and in terms of the skills and capacity of staff and counsellors. The practice also is a valuable activity that supports culture and language.

### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Aboriginal values and worldviews
- Capacity to heal
- Cultural interventions

### Community-based Example:

- *Musqueam Language Program*, Musqueam First Nation, BC (see page 41).

## Language Curriculum for Children

---

A language curriculum for school-aged children nurtures an Aboriginal identity and worldview. Learning, acquiring, and demonstrating fluency in an Aboriginal language has been shown to contribute to positive self-esteem, improved academic performance, and may contribute to community well-being and cultural continuity. Language education is a form of cultural intervention that contributes to the process of decolonization and healing. In an effort to revitalize the hənqəmihəm language, the *Musqueam Preschool Lessons Project* involves the research, design, and delivery of a cultural curriculum to preschool students using appropriate lessons and themes and accurate language lessons. Another example is the Splatsin Tsm7aksaltn Society's child care program. Elders (Grandmothers) spend time with infants and toddlers speaking the Secwepemc language in order to preserve the language and promote the Splatsin culture. In general terms, the use of a language curriculum for children serves as a promising practice that promotes culture and language, and targets children and youth.

### Healing Characteristic Associated with the Practice:

- Aboriginal values and worldviews
- Cultural interventions

### Community-based Examples:

- *Musqueam Language Program*, Musqueam First Nation, BC (see page 41).
- *Cultural Program*, Splatsin Child Care and Learning Centre, Enderby, BC (see page 42).

## Long-Term, Dynamic, and Dedicated Leadership

---

While not necessarily a promising practice for healing, it is important to note that political support within a community helps make healing initiatives happen. In the case of the Membertou, the band government has been instrumental in establishing new partnerships, alliances, and for providing the support needed to address large-scale issues. It is within this context of support that communities can assemble the resources and capacity to enable the design and operation of healing programs and initiatives.

#### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- n/a

#### Community-based Example:

- *Membertou Wellness Home*, Membertou First Nation, Sydney, NS (see page 40).

## Ongoing Evaluation

---

Establishing an ongoing evaluation process is an important component of program management and financial accountability. Ongoing evaluations can identify strengths and weaknesses of a program or service and help it to meet the ever-changing needs of clients and the community. As well, evaluation results can strengthen the potential for new or continued funding. As a pilot project, the Prairie Spirit Connections' *Tending the Fire Leadership Program* incorporated an ongoing program evaluation component to help measure how well the program meets client needs. Self-evaluation by program implementers allows for continual program growth and development by staff. Another example of a pilot project with an evaluation component is the *Youth Violence Prevention Toolkit* produced by the Native Women's Association of Canada. A component of the evaluation process is the participant evaluation forms included in the kits. As a promising practice, ongoing evaluation is an important consideration during program design and operation.

#### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- n/a

#### Community-based Examples:

- *Tending the Fire Leadership Program*, Prairie Spirit Connections Inc., Regina, SK (see page 43).
- *Youth Violence Prevention Toolkit*, Native Women's Association of Canada, Ottawa, ON (see page 47).

## On-site Community Healing Services

---

Community members benefit when they can access local healing services because they do not have to leave their homes and families for extended periods of time. Community-based counselling and healing services increase the community's capacity to heal and encourages healing environments that are personally and culturally safe. Rankin Inlet, for example, is a remote community that benefits from locally based services. The *Rankin Inlet Spousal Abuse Counselling Program* is designed, in part, to provide support for abusers and victims so they do not have to leave the community for counselling. The practice of providing on-site services is a consideration during program design and operation and promotes community outreach and engagement activities.

#### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Personal and cultural safety
- Capacity to heal

#### Community-based Example:

- *Rankin Inlet Spousal Abuse Counselling Program*, Pulaarvik Kablu Friendship Centre, Rankin Inlet, NU (see page 44).

## On-Site Trained Emergency Support Staff and Counsellors

---

Trained support staff should be available on site and ready to address any triggers and/or emotional outbursts that may occur as a result of the difficult nature or content of a healing program or during workshops or information sessions. The healing process must unfold with the support of a skilled healing team. For example, Wabano Centre's *Family Art Therapy Program* sessions begin with a traditional talking circle and may include videos or guest speakers to help prompt discussions about the experiences and consequences of the Residential Schools. Trained support staff and counsellors help the art therapist deliver the program and provide psychological support as needed. This practice is an important consideration with respect to a program's choice of staff and counsellors and the program's capacity for community engagement and outreach.

### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Personal and cultural safety
- Capacity to heal

### Community-based Example:

- *Family Art Therapy Program*, Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, Ottawa, ON (see page 46).

## Residential School Survivor Support

---

Resolution Health Support Workers (RHSWs) under the Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program, offer Survivors and their families a wide range of support services so that they may safely participate in legal proceedings and other activities related to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. As a promising practice, the presence of RHSWs contributes to the capacity of a program, and community, to heal. The Eskasoni Mental Health and Social Work Service hired a RHSW to support Survivors engaged in the settlement agreement process. The RHSW also coordinated traditional healing and ceremonial activities, and provided education within the community about the intergenerational effects of the Residential Schools. As a healing practice, a RHSW on staff is an important staffing and counselling option and important for community outreach and engagement activities.

### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Personal and cultural safety
- Capacity to heal
- Reclaiming history

### Community-based Example:

- *Community Therapeutic Healing Program*, Eskasoni Mental Health and Social Work Service, Eskasoni, NS (see page 39).

## Service Provider Community Network

---

A network among service agencies and frontline workers is an effective forum to assess existing services, to identify service delivery gaps, to share information, to address community issues and crises, and to strategize on options to strengthen community services. In terms of healing, community networks can improve a community's capacity to heal. Networks also provide a better context in which a program or project operates by offering a better sense of the community's resources, strengths, and challenges. The *Rankin Inlet Spousal Abuse Counselling Program* benefits from a strong network among community service providers and their personnel. Through regular meetings, community issues and problems are discussed and ways to improve various facets of their services are considered. This practice of participating in a service provider network is relevant to the design and operation of a program.

### Healing Characteristic Associated with the Practice:

- Capacity to heal

### Community-based Example:

- *Rankin Inlet Spousal Abuse Counselling Program*, Pulaarvik Kablu Friendship Centre, Rankin Inlet, NU (see page 44).

## Social Networks for Crisis Outreach and Intervention

---

A Facebook account or other social media tool can help agencies, programs, and crisis intervention services reach out to clients, especially to youth. These new media services can act as an icebreaker and make it easier for young clients to access services. This strategy increases a program or agency's capacity to heal by broadening its outreach techniques. The *Wagmatcook Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling Program*, for example, took on suicide prevention and intervention support to youth as a result of having youth approach the program for guidance and assistance in times of crisis. Social media, such as Facebook, have been credited as a valuable outreach tool for youth seeking help and assistance during crisis. The use of social media as a promising practice is meaningful in terms of community engagement and outreach and in terms of program components that target children and youth as clients.

### Healing Characteristic Associated with the Practice:

- Personal and cultural safety

### Community-based Example:

- *Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling Program*, Wagmatcook, NS (see page 40).

## Staff Participation in Healing Activities

---

Staff should be encouraged to participate in healing and ceremonial activities, as this provides both staff and clients with a shared spiritual and healing experience that builds bonds and trust. Skilled and active healers build the program's capacity to heal. Staff participation promotes Aboriginal values and worldviews and fosters an environment of personal and cultural safety that contributes to healing. The *Tending the Fire Leadership Program* is an example of an initiative where program staff follow traditional ways and participate in such activities as fasting, sacred fire, sweat lodges, Elder teachings, and Sun Dances at the same level as the male clients. In some ways, the program's ceremonial and cultural components have fostered a revival and reclamation of traditional practices.



#### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Aboriginal values and worldviews
- Personal and cultural safety
- Capacity to heal

#### Community-based Example:

- *Tending the Fire Leadership Program*, Prairie Spirit Connections Inc., Regina, SK (see page 43).

## Teach Aboriginal Languages to non-Aboriginal Students

---

Aboriginal language courses for non-Aboriginal students promote cultural awareness and understanding within the general Canadian population and serve to break down stereotypes and racism. Though less meaningful in terms of individual healing and decolonization, this practice addresses the larger social conditions that foster marginalization, cultural conflict, and assimilation. The university-level *Musqueam Language Program* has enrolled a number of non-Aboriginal students into the hən̓q̓m̓iñəm language classes. As a healing practice, this program component serves to promote culture and language.

#### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- n/a

#### Community-based Example:

- *Musqueam Language Program*, Musqueam First Nation, BC (see page 41).

## Traditional Ceremonies

---

Traditional healing ceremonies such as the Sun Dance, Sweat Lodge, and Pipe Ceremony offer clients a way to connect with their Aboriginal culture and identity while engaging in healing activities that alleviate the long-term trauma endured by Survivors and those intergenerationally impacted by the Residential Schools. As promising practices, these activities promote Aboriginal values and worldviews and serve as a form of cultural intervention that promotes decolonization. They establish the necessary conditions for healing. The Prairie Spirit Connections' *Tending the Fire Leadership Program* relies heavily on traditional ceremonies and activities to help men deal with problem behaviours that have led to conflicts with the law, as well as personal traumatic issues, homelessness, substance abuse, and/or unemployment. Practices involving traditional ceremonies can be used to blend traditional and contemporary therapies and to promote culture and language.

#### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Aboriginal values and worldviews
- Cultural interventions
- Therapeutic healing

#### Community-based Example:

- *Tending the Fire Leadership Program*, Prairie Spirit Connections Inc., Regina, SK (see page 43).



## Unconditional Intake Policy

---

Clients may encounter difficulties completing a program. A policy that permits them to remain in a program, or to return for future sessions, creates an environment of understanding, forgiveness, and acceptance. An unconditional intake policy fosters a sense of hope as part of the healing process. This serves as a form of personal safety, a condition for healing. The *Tending the Fire Leadership Program* advocates an unconditional intake policy because it can be difficult for urban clients to complete the ten-month program. Those dealing with mental health or alcohol problems often find it difficult to remain enrolled so they have the opportunity to return after experiencing setbacks. Unconditional support encourages a sense of supportiveness and security and, ultimately, encourages the clients to persevere through adversity. As a policy, this practice should be considered during a program's design and operations phase.

### Healing Characteristic Associated with the Practice:

- Personal and cultural safety

### Community-based Example:

- *Tending the Fire Leadership Program*, Prairie Spirit Connections Inc., Regina, SK (see page 43).

## Welcome Home Ceremonies

---

Welcome Home ceremonies for Survivors have proven to foster a sense of healing, renewal, and reconciliation for those who were never properly welcomed back to the community after attending Residential School, or for those who only returned in the advanced stages of their life. This practice was recommended during the *Bridging Our Communities' National Gathering on Promising Practices for Healing and Decolonization*. As a healing practice, it is an important community outreach and engagement activity.

### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Aboriginal values and worldviews
- Personal and cultural safety

### Community-based Examples:

- n/a



## Women-Specific Healing

---

Aboriginal women have endured gender-specific historical and contemporary discriminatory policies and experiences that require a gender-specific healing approach and worldview. Female clients should be offered knowledge and education regarding Aboriginal women's unique colonial experience as it relates to healing, decolonization, and reconciliation. Eskasoni's Community Therapeutic Services includes a women-specific component that provides, in part, education about the traditional role of Mi'kmaw women prior to colonization and provides education about the intergenerational impacts of the Residential School experience. This healing practice is important in terms of targeted programming and a gender-specific clientele.

### Healing Characteristics Associated with the Practice:

- Aboriginal values and worldviews
- Capacity to heal
- Reclaiming history
- Therapeutic healing

### Community-based Example:

- *Community Therapeutic Healing Program*, Eskasoni Mental Health and Social Work Service, Eskasoni, NS (see page 39).

## Youth Outreach and Involvement

---

Youth outreach increases the likelihood that Aboriginal youth will use social services and participate in programs and activities. Counselling services, ceremonies, sports activities, dances, culture camps, language programs, and mentoring initiatives all are effective methods of deterring youth from addiction, crime, and other damaging behaviours. Effective programming can be achieved when youth design programs for youth. As part of the *Eskasoni Community Therapeutic Healing Program*, a youth outreach worker provides one-on-one counselling as well as coordinates cultural and community activities and time with Elders. These outreach activities increase the likelihood that Aboriginal youth will use social services and participate in programs and activities. The Native Women's Association of Canada provided youth the opportunity to design the *Youth Violence Prevention Toolkit* to ensure an appropriate and effective program. Accordingly, youth outreach should be considered at the level of program design and operation, as a program component seeking community engagement and outreach, and in the context of targeted programming focusing on children and youth.

### Healing Characteristic Associated with the Practice:

- Personal and cultural safety
- Aboriginal values and worldviews

### Community-based Examples:

- *Community Therapeutic Healing Program*, Eskasoni Mental Health and Social Work Service, Eskasoni, NS (see page 39).
- *Youth Violence Prevention Toolkit*, Native Women's Association of Canada, Ottawa, ON (see page 47).



## Youth Outreach, Activities, and Involvement

How to implement: In order to create youth outreach and involvement, community activities are crucial. The list provided above, detailing youth outreach, provides great examples of ways to bring the youth populations of communities together, in a productive and positive manner. It is important to create relationships with the locations in which youth are involved. Therefore, if one is interested in planning a youth activity, it would be important to create a relationship with teachers, principals, community centres, etc., to ensure that the activity, and the intention of the activity, are communicated and advertised for the youth to attend.

In terms of youth involvement, one could hold discussions with a group of youth who are willing to provide their thoughts and opinions, and consider consulting them on a regular basis, such as with Elder involvement. It is important to create a safe and welcoming environment where youth feel they are able to provide honest opinions. In doing so, one ensures that they are creating and providing the best service possible.

# Bridging our Communities

## Charting Promising Healing Practices

The following chart lists 41 promising healing practices identified during the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project*. Thirty-six were identified during site visits and interviews and an additional five were identified during the November 2009 *Bridging Our Communities' National Gathering on Promising Practices for Healing and Decolonization*.

The promising healing practices are organized in the chart according to the community-based initiatives that nominated them during the research phase of the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project*. They are also coded according to one or more of the six characteristics that typify a healing practice (see Figure 1, page 6) and in terms of one or more of the eight practical considerations discussed above (see Section 5, page 9).

Essentially, the chart is intended to help you locate promising healing practices that meet your interests. If your interest is in community outreach, you can scan the column labelled *Practical Considerations or Operational Focus of the Practice* and locate all relevant practices coded for this practical consideration. If your interest is more in terms of healing characteristics, you can scan the two columns labelled *Program Elements Necessary for Healing* and *Intervention Strategies or Components* to identify the practices that promote, for example, Aboriginal values and worldviews or cultural interventions that contribute to decolonization.

The chart is intended to be used in conjunction with the profiles provided for each of the ten community-based initiatives that participated in the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project* and in conjunction

with the alphabetical listing of the promising healing practices. Depending on your interests, the chart can be used to:

- **Link the promising healing practices to the community-based initiatives that participated in the Bridging Our Communities Research Project.**

The chart lists each of the participating *Bridging Our Communities* community-based initiatives down the left-hand column along with the associated promising healing practices nominated by that initiative. This layout allows the user to cross-reference the promising healing practices with the associated project. A detailed description of each project is provided in Section 10 entitled: *Bridging Our Communities Community-Based Profiles* (see page 38).

- **Identify promising practices according to six different healing characteristics.**

The chart provides two columns that allow you to identify promising healing practices in terms of their relevance to healing the legacy of the Residential Schools (see Figure 1, page 6). The first column codes for program elements necessary for healing and the second codes for intervention strategies or program components. You can easily scan the columns to identify practices that meet your healing interests. You can then learn more by referring to the alphabetical compilation of the promising healing practices (see Section 6, page 10) or by reading the project descriptions (see Section 10, page 38).

- **Program implementation, operation, and activities.** The last column in the chart codes each of the promising healing practices according to eight practical considerations. These are discussed in detail in Section 5: Practical Considerations (page 9). The idea is that you can scan down the column in search of those characteristics of interest in order to identify relevant promising healing practices. You then can cross-reference the characteristic with the promising healing practice and the associated community-based project. You can then learn more about the promising healing practices you identify by referring to the alphabetical compilation of the promising healing practices (see Section 6, page 10) or by reading the project profiles (see Section 10, page 38). A promising healing practice can have more than one healing characteristic. As well, some in the following chart have none. They are more practical or operational in nature but do not fall within the Framework for Understanding Trauma and Healing (see Figure 1, page 6). These latter tended to be nominated as promising practices during the November 2009 *Bridging Our Communities' National Gathering on Promising Practices for Healing and Decolonization*.

The six healing characteristics are summarized as follows:

#### Conditions necessary for healing:

1. **Aboriginal Values and Worldviews:** Values and guiding principles that reflect an Aboriginal worldview.
2. **Personal and Cultural Safety:** A healing environment that is personally and culturally safe.
3. **Capacity to Heal:** A capacity to heal represented by skilled healers and healing teams.

#### Three pillars of healing:

4. **Reclaiming History:** Historical component including education about Residential Schools and their impacts.
5. **Cultural Interventions:** Process of decolonization.
6. **Therapeutic Healing:** A diverse range and combination of traditional and contemporary therapeutic interventions.

The eight codes for program implementation, operation and implementation are summarized as follows:

#### Service providers and agencies

1. **Program Design and Operation**
2. **Staff and Counsellors**

#### Program component

3. **Community Engagement and Outreach**
4. **Traditional and Contemporary Healing**
5. **Culture and Language**

#### Targeted programming/clients

6. **Parents**
7. **Children and Youth**
8. **Gender Specific**



# Promising Healing Practices Chart







# Promising Healing Practices Chart

This chart serves as a way to cross-reference promising healing practices with their original, nominating community-based initiative, with the healing characteristics of a promising practice, and with such practical considerations as program design and operation, program activities, and the program's audience or clientele. The chart can be scanned to identify practices of interest and then you can learn more about the practice(s) in Section 9 and/or more about the community-based initiative in Section 10 of this toolkit.

Community-Based Initiative	Promising Practice	Characteristics of Promising Healing Practices		Practical Considerations or Operational Focus of the Practice
		Program Elements Necessary for Healing	Intervention Strategies or Components	
<b>ESKASONI:</b> Community Therapeutic Healing Program	Aboriginal community-based model of mental health delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> <li>• Capacity to heal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural interventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> <li>• Staff &amp; counsellors</li> </ul>
	Residential School Survivor support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> <li>• Capacity to heal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reclaiming history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff &amp; counsellors</li> <li>• Community engagement &amp; outreach</li> </ul>
	Women-specific healing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> <li>• Capacity to heal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reclaiming history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender specific</li> </ul>
	Community outreach and events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural interventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community engagement &amp; outreach</li> </ul>
	Culturally appropriate parenting education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural interventions</li> <li>• Therapeutic healing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents</li> </ul>
	Youth outreach, activities, and involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> <li>• Community engagement &amp; outreach</li> <li>• Children &amp; youth</li> </ul>
<b>WAGMATCOOK:</b> Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling Program	Balance local and external counselling services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> <li>• Capacity to heal</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> <li>• Community engagement &amp; outreach</li> <li>• Children &amp; youth</li> </ul>
	Social networks for crisis outreach and intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Therapeutic healing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> <li>• Staff &amp; counsellors</li> </ul>
	Cultural programs and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture &amp; language</li> <li>• Children &amp; youth</li> </ul>
	Community steering committees and working groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> <li>• Capacity to heal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural interventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> <li>• Community engagement &amp; outreach</li> </ul>



Community-Based Initiative	Promising Practice	Characteristics of Promising Healing Practices		Practical Considerations or Operational Focus of the Practice
		Program Elements Necessary for Healing	Intervention Strategies or Components	
<b>MEMBERTOU:</b> Wellness Home	Economic opportunity and development			• Program design & operation
	Balance local and external counselling services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> <li>• Capacity to heal</li> </ul>	• Therapeutic healing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> <li>• Staff &amp; counsellors</li> </ul>
	Long-term, dynamic, and dedicated leadership			• Program design & operation

<b>MUSQUEAM:</b> Language Program	Cultural methodology for language teaching & learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> </ul>	• Cultural interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> <li>• Culture &amp; language</li> </ul>
	Teach Aboriginal languages to non-Aboriginal students			• Culture & language
	Academic partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> <li>• Capacity to heal</li> </ul>		• Program design & operation
	Invest in community skills and expertise development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> </ul>	• Cultural interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> <li>• Staff &amp; counsellors</li> <li>• Culture &amp; language</li> </ul>
	Language curriculum for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture &amp; language</li> <li>• Children &amp; youth</li> </ul>

<b>SPLATSIN:</b> Children’s Language Program	Cultural and developmental child and youth programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> </ul>	• Cultural interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture &amp; language</li> <li>• Children &amp; youth</li> </ul>
	Language curriculum for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> </ul>	• Cultural interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture &amp; language</li> <li>• Children &amp; youth</li> </ul>
	Elder involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> <li>• Capacity to heal</li> </ul>	• Cultural interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> <li>• Traditional &amp; contemporary healing</li> <li>• Culture &amp; language</li> </ul>

Community-Based Initiative	Promising Practice	Characteristics of Promising Healing Practices		Practical Considerations or Operational Focus of the Practice
		Program Elements Necessary for Healing	Intervention Strategies or Components	
<b>PRAIRIE SPIRIT:</b> Tending the Fire Leadership Program	Traditional healing ceremonies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural interventions</li> <li>• Therapeutic healing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional &amp; contemporary healing</li> <li>• Culture &amp; language</li> </ul>
	Culturally appropriate and culture-specific approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> </ul>
	Unconditional intake policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> <li>• Community engagement &amp; outreach</li> </ul>
	Staff participation in healing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> <li>• Capacity to heal</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff &amp; counsellors</li> <li>• Culture &amp; language</li> </ul>
	Ongoing evaluation			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> </ul>
<b>RANKIN INLET:</b> Spousal Abuse Counselling Program	Community steering committees and working groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> <li>• Capacity to heal</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> <li>• Community engagement &amp; outreach</li> </ul>
	Elder involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> <li>• Capacity to heal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural interventions.</li> <li>• Therapeutic healing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> <li>• Traditional &amp; contemporary healing</li> <li>• Culture &amp; language</li> </ul>
	On-site community healing services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> <li>• Capacity to heal</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> <li>• Community engagement &amp; outreach</li> </ul>
	Service provider community network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity to heal</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> </ul>
	Benefits and support for frontline workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> <li>• Capacity to heal</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff &amp; counsellors</li> </ul>
<b>MANITOBA MÉTIS FEDERATION:</b> Neah Kee Papa Program	Gender-specific parenting programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural interventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender specific</li> </ul>
	Balancing cultural approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> </ul>



Community-Based Initiative	Promising Practice	Characteristics of Promising Healing Practices		Practical Considerations or Operational Focus of the Practice
		Program Elements Necessary for Healing	Intervention Strategies or Components	
WABANO: Child & Family Art Therapy Project	Infuse modern therapy with culturally appropriate approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> <li>• Capacity to heal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural interventions</li> <li>• Therapeutic healing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional &amp; contemporary healing</li> <li>• Culture &amp; language</li> </ul>
	Establish a supportive and non-judgmental environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> </ul>
	On-site trained emergency support staff and counsellors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> <li>• Capacity to heal</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff &amp; counsellors</li> <li>• Community engagement &amp; outreach</li> </ul>
	Elder and extended family involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural interventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community engagement &amp; outreach</li> <li>• Culture &amp; language</li> </ul>

Native Women's Association of Canada: Youth Violence Prevention Toolkit initiative	Youth outreach, activities, and involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community engagement &amp; outreach.</li> <li>• Children &amp; youth</li> </ul>
	Culturally appropriate community information material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community engagement &amp; outreach</li> </ul>
	Community-based toolkits and workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural interventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community engagement &amp; outreach</li> </ul>
	Community toolkit implementation training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity to heal</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff &amp; counsellors</li> </ul>
	Ongoing evaluation			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> </ul>

Other Promising Practices	Welcome Home ceremonies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> <li>• Personal &amp; cultural safety</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community engagement &amp; outreach</li> </ul>
	Comprehensive program planning and measurements			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> </ul>
	Fundraising framework and action plan			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program design &amp; operation</li> </ul>
	Community language retention programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal values &amp; worldviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural interventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture &amp; language</li> </ul>
	Art therapy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Therapeutic healing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional &amp; contemporary healing</li> </ul>

# Bridging our Communities

## Operational Challenges

In addition to sharing knowledge about effective promising practices for healing, many of the participants of the community-based initiatives that took part in the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project* shared stories of growth, struggle, and challenges with respect to their healing and decolonizing programs. Participants thought that this information should be included in the *Bridging Our Communities Toolkit* to inform other community-based service providers and other First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities about the potential operational challenges they may face when undertaking programs that support Survivors and their families.

Together, or individually, the following challenges can limit the progress, final outcome, or the deliverables of a healing project. It is worthwhile to keep them in mind as lessons learned by others.

Potential operational challenges include:

- **Knowledge and Understanding.** Experience has shown there is a lack of knowledge and understanding about the interrelationship between personal, family, and community problems and Canada's history of colonization. There is a need to inform the Canadian public and community members to mobilize leadership about the legacy of the Residential Schools and colonialism.
- **Traditional Knowledge and Cultural Heritage.** The loss or diminishment of traditional knowledge, language, culture, and spiritual practices may impede initiatives that seek to heal the legacy of Residential Schools and colonialism. Traditional knowledge and practices are important elements of healing and decolonization. The promotion of cultural identity has been shown to contribute to a community's well-being.
- **Financial Resources.** Crisis-by-crisis and project-by-project funding limits the potential for long-term holistic healing and cultural and language programs. Healing from the legacy of the Residential Schools and decolonization programs take time and indicators of success are complex and may not be immediate.
- **Child Welfare Agencies.** There are now approximately five times more First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children in the child welfare system than during the height of the Residential School era. There is a role for healing programs to work with these agencies.
- **Stress and Vicarious Trauma.** Support is required to overcome the stress and vicarious trauma commonly experienced by frontline counsellors and crisis intervention workers who deal with Survivors and their families.

- **Unresolved Grief.** There is a need to recognize the high levels of unresolved grief in Aboriginal communities. This can influence a community's readiness to heal.
- **Privacy and Confidentiality.** Within small close-knit communities, there is the potential for breaches in privacy, confidentiality, and the potential for conflicts of interest between community members and the service providers (and their families) who are working for community-based healing initiatives.
- **Safely Tell Stories.** Survivors may lack a forum or mechanism to share their stories and experiences. There is a need to offer formal venues and processes to allow all Survivors an opportunity to safely tell their stories.
- **Policies and Jurisdictions.** Government policies and jurisdictional disputes can limit access to healing services for Métis Survivors, First Nations individuals living off reserve, and Inuit living outside their home community.
- **Data Collection and Evaluation.** There can be a lack of time and resources in community service organizations to collect and analyze data that would document current and future needs. This information could be used to develop or modify programs to more effectively serve all segments of the community.



# *Bridging Our Communities* Community-based Profiles





## Community Therapeutic Healing Program, Eskasoni Mental Health and Social Work Service

---

The Eskasoni Mental Health and Social Work Service (EMH & SWS) was restructured in 2010 into the Eskasoni Mental Health Service following the end of AHF financial support. The original EMH & SWS delivered essential, culturally appropriate services within a safe and confidential environment. In-depth counselling was at the core of all services. These included crisis call intake, women-specific therapy, parenting programming, mental health outreach and advocacy, youth outreach (including social media such as chat lines, Facebook, and MSN chat), and traditional healing and ceremonies.

As a special project, the EMH & SWS undertook the *Community Therapeutic Healing* initiative to address the legacy of the Residential Schools and colonization. It responded to the needs of Survivors in a manner that respected, fostered, and enhanced Mi'kmaq culture, language, and spirituality. The initiative involved a three-pronged approach:

1. A focus on healing and resolution by addressing the deep psychological and emotional scars of Survivors through in-depth therapeutic clinical counselling services;
2. A focus on youth; and
3. A gathering place to nurture community interaction between youth and Elders and to address family dysfunction.

As part of the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project*, the EMH & SWS identified six promising healing practices. A **community-based model** for mental health services that employs local community members is considered to be at the crux of the agency's effectiveness. Staff dedication and personal commitment stems from personal, familial, and communal experiences and personal allegiance to the community. In terms of healing, staff are likely to speak the Aboriginal language and have first-hand knowledge of their community, its culture, strengths, dynamics, and problems. This promotes personal and cultural safety and facilitates culturally appropriate service delivery.

The EMH & SWS capacity to heal was augmented with a **RHSW on staff** who provided comprehensive support to Survivors and their families during legal proceedings and other activities related to the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement. A **women-specific healing** component provided education about the traditional role of Mi'kmaq women prior to colonization and knowledge about the intergenerational impacts of the Residential School experience. This targeted healing served to reclaim history, contribute to decolonization, and apply varying therapeutic healing techniques.

Another component of EMH & SWS' success is **community outreach**. Efforts to inform the community and establish trust will likely engage more community members to participate in a healing program. As a promising healing practice, outreach activities can foster personal and cultural safety. Home visits are undertaken as an extension of outreach activities. The visits serve as a stepping stone for families to learn about, and use counselling, therapy, and other healing services. As a promising healing practice, **parenting programs** help to remedy gaps in good parenting skills, weakened extended family relationships, and lost family traditions.

**Youth outreach and involvement** is another key element of the EMH & SWS *Community Therapeutic Healing Program*. Counselling services, ceremonies, sports, dancing, culture camps, language programs, and mentoring initiatives are all effective methods of deterring youth from addiction, crime, and other damaging behaviours. As a promising healing practice, these activities promote Aboriginal worldviews, unfold within a safe environment, and promote decolonization. As well, they increase the likelihood that Aboriginal youth will use social services and participate in cultural programs and activities.



## Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling Program, Wagmatcook First Nation

---

The Wagmatcook *Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling Program* operates out of the Wagmatcook Community Health Centre and consists of a local addiction counsellor, a traditional healer, and a mobile clinical therapist from the *Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling Association of Nova Scotia* (NADACA) central office. The program works with clients of all ages but especially with youth. Successful community outreach and client intake can be attributed, in part, to the counsellor being born and raised in the community. Trust and familiarity have helped to get community members involved in one-on-one counselling. A non-local NADACA mobile clinical therapist is available to provide counselling, therapy, and group services to those community members who may not be comfortable disclosing their abuse and trauma to a local counsellor and community member. This highlights the need to balance internal community resources with external services. Cultural appropriateness, trust, and outreach gained from a local counsellor must not outweigh the needs of the client and the limits of local resources.

The Wagmatcook *Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling Program* offers other activities that act as a deterrent and alternative to substance use. Many are directed at youth and involve traditional cultural activities that help to restore cultural practices and values. The Wagmatcook program also provides suicide prevention and intervention assistance to youth as a result of having youth approach the program for guidance and assistance in times of crisis. Social media, such as Facebook, are a valuable outreach tool for youth who seek help and assistance during crisis.

As part of the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project*, the Wagmatcook program identified four healing practices. There is a need to **balance local and external counselling services**. Employing and training community members as counsellors and frontline workers has proven valuable but it must be balanced with the provision of external support workers for community members who are concerned with privacy, confidentiality, and the potential for a conflict of interest.

The Wagmatcook program suggests **social media for crisis outreach and intervention** can increase an agency or program's capacity to heal by broadening its outreach techniques, especially for youth. Social media can act as an icebreaker and make it easier for clients to access services. Other outreach activities, such as **cultural programs and activities**, serve as alternatives and preventative measures to substance abuse, promote cultural values, practices and identity, and facilitate the process of decolonization.

The Wagmatcook *Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling Program* is a member of a **community steering committee** that brings community members and local service providers together to develop community-based and collaborative programs. Committee members, therefore, possess first-hand knowledge of community issues and needs and their input can be central to the development of effective and relevant programs and services. These committees ensure that an Aboriginal worldview is reflected in local programs and services.

## Membertou Wellness Home, Membertou First Nation

---

The *Membertou Wellness Home* is an urban-based service for the Mi'kmaw community located within the city boundaries of Sidney, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. It is a stand-alone health facility administered by the band's Health Department and delivers a full range of programs and services including crisis intervention and prevention, mental health and substance abuse services, community outreach, and healthy lifestyle promotion. In addition, there is a family practice medical clinic available to community members. When needed, counsellors from Eskasoni come to Membertou to work with Survivors on a more private basis.

The band council has successfully transformed the community into a significant player in the provincial economy. The Membertou First Nation has achieved ISO-9000 quality management certification which extends to the qualification of the health department and Wellness Home staff.

The *Membertou Wellness Home* offers monthly information sessions, group sessions, and one-on-one counselling. The youth centre offers a variety of activities — physical, educational, and cultural — within an environment of personal and cultural safety. The activities promote an Aboriginal worldview and can contribute to decolonization.

As part of the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project*, the *Membertou Wellness Home* identified three promising healing practices. **Economic opportunity and development** has enhanced community infrastructure, provided jobs, and enabled the creation and maintenance of services that better meet the needs of the community. Success has been achieved within a worldview that recognizes and respects Mi'kmaw heritage and culture.

Service delivery can be strengthened and enhanced by building **partnerships with surrounding Aboriginal communities**. They can share expertise and services amongst themselves to fill gaps in local services and infrastructure. Membertou is a member of the Tui'kn Partnership (formally the Tui'kn Initiative) along with the Mi'kmaw communities of Eskasoni, Wagmatcook, Potlotek, and We'koqma'q. Based on a shared vision for health and health care, the five communities developed and implemented a collaborative holistic, multidisciplinary and comprehensive primary care model to improve the quality of life of residents. The initiative originally focused on diabetes prevention and management, non-traditional tobacco use, childhood injury prevention, and prescription drug misuse in the communities.

Though less of a promising healing practice, the *Membertou Wellness Home* recognized the value of **long-term, dynamic, and dedicated leadership** in providing the political support needed to make community healing initiatives happen. Community leadership can be instrumental in establishing new partnerships and alliances, and providing the support needed to assemble the resources and capacity to begin to heal.

## Musqueam Language Program, Musqueam First Nation

---

The Musqueam First Nation are hənqəmihəm speakers of the Coast Salish dialect. Traditionally, they live near the mouth of the Fraser River and in what is now the Greater Vancouver area. As a result of the Residential School system, the language has become one of the most endangered First Nations dialects in British Columbia. However, the band's Department of Language and Culture works to develop educational tools and establish learning environments to help community members to learn their ancestral language.

The *First Voice Online Archive Project* involves the research, crosscheck, and data entry of hənqəmihəm words. The *Musqueam Preschool Lessons Project* involves the research, design, and delivery of a cultural curriculum to preschool students. The Language Department also translates documents to ensure the ancestral language is accurately represented in appropriate public forums such as the Vancouver School District. The band has published seven language books for adults and youth, three illustrated storybooks, and special audio recordings for hənqəmihəm learners. As well, classes are offered three days a week at the community's preschool. The identity of the Musqueam people is embedded in the language so the opportunity for children to learn their ancestral language enhances their cultural understanding and identity.

In 1997, the Musqueam First Nation partnered with the University of British Columbia's (UBC) First Nations Languages Program to offer university-accredited classes that focus on the linguistics of the hənqəmihəm dialect. Though the program is funded by the university, the classes are taught at the Elders Centre by a Musqueam

community member and a UBC staff member. Students range from Musqueam youth, college and university students, members of other First Nations, to interested non-Native university students. The instructors use an interactive format of plays, word games, and demonstrations of traditional activities as well as standard university instruction techniques to teach competency in comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, conversational fluency, literacy, transcription, oral traditions, and the cultural contextualization of language use. Students are encouraged to immerse themselves in a traditional way of being and speaking in an effort to understand the worldview of the Musqueam people.

As part of the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project*, the Musqueam Language Program identified five promising healing practices. Decolonization and an Aboriginal worldview are promoted through the **cultural methodology for language teaching and learning** used during the university level language classes. The classes emphasize a cultural and holistic approach that includes an interactive format of plays, word games, and demonstrations of traditional activities. **Teaching an Aboriginal language to non-Aboriginal students** is considered a way to raise awareness and understanding in the general Canadian population and to break down stereotypes and racism. This promising practice addresses the larger social conditions that foster marginalization, cultural conflict, and assimilation.

The Musqueam have formally ratified an **academic partnership** with UBC to respect the intellectual property rights of the community. Formal partnerships can protect against the misappropriation of cultural knowledge and oral traditions.

The Musqueam have encouraged community members to learn the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm dialect. This **investment in community skills and expertise development** builds capacity, local expertise, and contributes to the process of decolonization. Language revitalization is recognized as a component of decolonization and as a means of healing from the legacy of Residential Schools. As well, a **language curriculum for school-aged children** offers multiple benefits. Language programming at an early age nurtures Aboriginal identity and worldviews, positive self-esteem, improved academic performance, and may contribute to community well-being and to cultural continuity.

## Cultural Program, Splatsin Child Care and Learning Centre

---

The Splatsin Child Care and Learning Centre is a permanent, fully licensed and equipped non-profit, on-reserve facility located in Enderby, British Columbia. In 2009, the Centre was renamed the Splatsin Tsm7aksaltn (Splatsin Teaching Centre) Society because the Centre teaches the whole community and not just children. It is a community hub of services that includes licensed group child care, hot meals for children, Aboriginal infant development programming, dental varnishing services for children, a parent workshop, parent drop-in groups, a car seat loan program, a resource library for parents, and enhanced child care programming such as yoga, dance, music, language and culture.

Through four age-specific programs, children can learn, play, and experience their culture with the highest standards and quality of facilities and care. The programs are delivered by licensed and certified early childhood development educators and caregivers. The staff support language revitalization, and understand and promote the values and practices of the Splatsin people. The Centre contributes to the community's healing and decolonization efforts by targeting children enrolled in the early childhood development programs

The cultural program was developed to meet the cultural and language needs of the community. Splatsin-speaking Kia7as (Grandmothers) come together three times a week to share the Secwepemc language with babies and toddlers. Grandmothers find it easier to use their language with younger children because the children know less English and therefore they mimic and pronounce the Secwepemc words perfectly and naturally.

Many of the children are intergenerationally impacted by the Residential Schools and Grandmothers who are Survivors find the program therapeutic and meaningful — a healing conduit.

This “Baby Immersion” program preserves and promotes culture and language. Children learn to speak their traditional language, practice cultural feasting, learn about traditional concepts of seasons and harvest, hold traditional naming ceremonies and receive traditional names. Parents, siblings, extended family members, and other community members often participate in feasts, ceremonies, and other cultural activities as well.

As part of the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project*, the Splatsin Teaching Centre identified three promising healing practices. **Cultural and developmental programming for children and youth** is recognized as a way to prevent future school dropout and to increase the likelihood of higher educational achievement. Combined developmental and Aboriginal programming during the early stages of education helps to establish and nurture an Aboriginal identity and worldview and reinforces self-worth, self-esteem, confidence, mental and physical health, and well-being. **Language education programming for children** can have a positive outcome on academic achievement. Learning, acquiring, and demonstrating fluency in an Aboriginal language can contribute to positive self-esteem, community well-being, cultural continuity, and contribute to the process of decolonization.

Engaging Elders in an ongoing and consistent capacity reinforces their traditional role of sharing and mentoring and promotes the meaningful engagement and participation of more community members in the healing and learning process. **Elder involvement** reinforces Aboriginal identity, values, and worldviews, and increases a program’s capacity to heal as Elders begin to work with other skilled healers and educators.

## Tending the Fire Leadership Program, Prairie Spirit Connections Inc.

---

Prairie Spirit Connections Inc. is a small non-profit organization dedicated to improving the social, cultural, and economic well-being of urban Aboriginal people living in Regina, Saskatchewan. The effort is to advance healthier and more productive lifestyles by delivering Native life skills and pre-employment training programs within the context of cultural awareness and healing. Many clients are direct Survivors or are intergenerationally impacted by the Residential Schools. Some are homeless and some have experienced the child welfare system as foster children. The agency offers information and awareness to clients to help them find and access city services. Clients can receive personal support to make phone calls, complete applications, acquire documents and records, write letters, and to find transportation.

Prairie Spirit Connections discovered a need for a culturally based program to assist urban Aboriginal men involved with the justice system in learning new and healthy behaviours, in creating healthy family circles, and in becoming engaged with Elders and traditional healers. The *Tending the Fire Leadership Program* is a referral process that acts as an alternative to incarceration, supports reintegration for Aboriginal men, and addresses the underlying causes of problem behaviours.

The program helps groups of men, ages 18 to 50, to deal with the underlying causes of problem behaviours that may have led to conflicts with the law. The program consists of crisis intervention, a variety of traditional healing ceremonies, counselling, and overall life coaching as well as post-program coaching and support. The overall objective is to give Aboriginal men an opportunity to become job ready. The program is grounded in Aboriginal traditions and values which are the basis for its success. A leadership-mentorship component allows clients to serve as mentors with the next group of clients who start the program.

As part of the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project*, Prairie Spirit Connections identified five promising healing practices with respect to the *Tending the Fire Leadership Program*. **Traditional healing ceremonies**

such as the Sun Dance, Sweat Lodge, and Pipe Ceremony allow clients to connect with their Aboriginal culture and identity while engaging in healing activities that alleviate the long-term trauma of Survivors and those intergenerationally impacted by the Residential Schools. The program should be **culturally appropriate and culture-specific**. The healing activities should be tailored to the needs of the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities and program staff should be culturally aware. The program should encourage **staff participation in healing activities**. Shared spiritual and healing experiences between staff and clients builds trust and social bonds. Full staff participation embraces Aboriginal values and worldviews as guiding principles and fosters an environment of personal and cultural safety that contributes to healing. These are necessary conditions for healing.

In practical terms, Prairie Spirit Connections Inc. has adopted an **unconditional intake policy** that permits clients who may have difficulties completing a program to remain, or to return for future sessions. This creates an environment of understanding and acceptance and fosters a sense of hope as part of the healing process. This serves as a form of personal safety, a condition for healing. The organization has also adopted an **ongoing evaluation** process to ensure the program is meeting the ever-changing needs of clients and the community. Project evaluations are an important element of program management and financial accountability.

## Rankin Inlet Spousal Abuse Counselling Program, Pulaarvik Kablu Friendship Centre

---

Rankin Inlet's non-profit Pulaarvik Kablu Friendship Centre is the only friendship centre in Nunavut. The organization offers a variety of programs that benefit both the community and the entire Kivalliq Region. Many programs offer professional counselling while others offer counselling that is more holistic and traditional in nature. For example, an outreach program helps former students of Residential Schools and their families to increase their personal awareness, to improve self-evaluation skills, and to improve relationships with family members and others. A program for victims offers counselling and assistance while they are in court or when they face violence in the home. A program for Elders and youth includes activities out on the land, traditional Inuit games, drum dancing, how to make a drum, traditional Inuit songs, and throat singing. Other community programs include prenatal nutrition for expectant mothers; early education programming that provides social and language instruction; transportation services for schoolchildren; library and Internet services; and a traditional sewing and Inuit clothing program for young people.

The *Rankin Inlet Spousal Abuse Counselling Program* (RISACP) was established in 2002 as a three-year pilot project in response to the number of spousal assault cases appearing before the local courts. Victims also wanted counselling to help stop the violence and to avoid having their partners sent to jail outside of the community. Using a model originating in Whitehorse, Yukon, justice agencies and a community-led working group that included Elders developed and implemented a comprehensive program model to meet local needs. The RISACP targets both abusers and the victims of abuse in a culturally appropriate and innovative manner. The program is designed to provide an alternative to incarceration for people who have begun an abusive lifestyle and who wish to change. The overall goal is to reduce the incidence of violence and spousal abuse in the community.

The RISACP brings several agencies and organizations together to better serve the community. Offenders faced with spousal assault charges can be referred by the local court if they have not yet been sentenced. The offender needs to be recommended by the RCMP and the Prosecutor and must be accepted into the program by a counsellor. Counselling sessions are guided by a detailed manual prepared for the program. Between 38 and 43 individual and group sessions may take place during each Abuser's Program cycle. RISACP delivers therapeutically sound and culturally appropriate counselling that focuses on changing controlling behaviour and extreme emotional dependence.



A separate victim's program involves as many as 28 individual and group counselling sessions. Victims have an opportunity to examine the links between personal struggles with violence and the common experience of those intergenerationally impacted by the Residential Schools. Victims learn about different types of abuse and they learn how to defuse or prevent situations that can lead to violence.

As part of the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project*, the RISACP identified five promising healing practices. Community members possess first-hand knowledge of local issues and needs and therefore **community development and ongoing involvement** should be integral to program and service design and implementation. In this way, Aboriginal values and worldviews are understood and incorporated into the program or service. Consistent with this is **Elder involvement**. Elders can contribute to the preservation and transmission of traditional knowledge, skills, practices, values, and cultural identity. This is especially important in light of the cultural losses and disruptions that resulted from the Residential School system. Elders can play an important role in programs that seek to establish therapeutic healing that combines traditional and contemporary interventions. Programming can also be improved through a **service provider community network**. It can serve as an effective forum to assess existing services, to identify service delivery gaps, to share information, to address community issues and crises, and to strategize on options to strengthen community services.

For rural and remote communities, community members benefit from **on-site community healing services**. With local services, individuals can receive counselling and healing services without having to leave their homes and families for extended periods of time. Service providers and frontline workers also need local support. This is especially important in small rural or remote communities where staff recruitment and retention is a problem. There is a need to provide **aid for frontline workers** so that they have adequate outlets to deal with occupational vicarious trauma and excessive levels of stress. Counselling, comprehensive health benefits, debriefing sessions, and support systems for staff contribute to the quality and consistency of community healing services.

## Neah Kee Papa Program, Manitoba Métis Federation

The Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) is a non-profit, democratic, and self-governing body that promotes, protects, and advances the political, social, and economic interests of the Métis people of Manitoba. The MMF provides a wide range of programs and services that are consistent with Métis cultural values and health, social, and economic needs.

In 1999, the MMF's Métis Community Liaison Department identified the need for services to support young fathers. As a result, the *Neah Kee Papa ("I Am Your Father") Program* was established as a parenting enhancement program designed to support the well-being of children and to encourage and promote the parenting role of fathers. The program is open to both Métis and non-Métis fathers.

The *Neah Kee Papa Program* typically offers ten weekly sessions. They are flexible to meet the unique and challenging needs of its clients. Fathers can access counselling, peer resource groups, guest speakers, and a range of other MMF resources and programs. They learn to identify the root causes of family segregation that began generations ago with the Residential Schools and the child welfare system. Fathers examine their own family origins and upbringing, and learn to identify and deal with unresolved issues from the past that may be at the root of unhealthy patterns affecting their families today. Tools for effective communication and anger management are suggested that can facilitate healthy relationships among parents. Using traditional knowledge, participants learn about the father's role within the family. They also are instructed on proactive parenting methods that broaden the fathers' understanding of children's emotional, behavioural, and physical well-being and empower them to provide positive emotional support.

As part of the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project*, the MMF identified two promising healing practices with respect to the *Neah Kee Papa Program*. **Gender-specific parenting programming** is an effective way to help parents to understand and restore their role and rights within the family. Culturally appropriate methods for enhancing parenting skills can reinforce Aboriginal values and help to restore Aboriginal identity among parents.

Within an urban Aboriginal community, it is important to ensure a **balanced cultural approach** to meet the varying cultural orientation of clients. Culturally appropriate programming must be balanced to meet the specific needs of clients. In an urban setting, this may mean a more multicultural perspective.

## Family Art Therapy Program, Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health

---

The Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health (WCAH) is an urban health centre that delivers quality holistic and culturally relevant clinical, social, economic, and cultural initiatives to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis residents living in Ottawa, Ontario. The reclamation of culture is considered a pillar of healing. Good medicine involves the teaching and healing practices of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis and the wisdom of Elders, traditional healers, and teachers. A belief in ceremony and celebration also is important, as is a focus on the individual in the context of family and community.

In addition to quality primary health care, WCAH offers health programming in the areas of mental health, FASD, diabetes, HIV, perinatal support, smoking cessation, healthy living, and support for seniors. A mobile health and addictions outreach team supports Aboriginal people at high risk of homelessness. Cultural programming supports the community mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Other programs include a community garden, a community kitchen, a children's program, youth programs, an intergenerational bridging program, and a parents-as-teachers program.

The WCAH *Child and Family Art Project* was established in 2003 but ended in early 2010 due to lack of funding. With the guidance of Elders and Survivors, a series of interrelated and interdependent activities were implemented to help children and families heal from the intergenerational impacts of Residential School abuse. The program was founded on the belief that Aboriginal traditions of art making and the process of contemporary art therapy provide a powerful means for self-expression and access to personal wisdom. Each program ran for 12 weeks and was offered at least three times a year.

First Nations, Inuit, and Métis families participated in the program along with extended family members. Art therapy fostered relationships of trust and a sense of belonging for families at risk. Nonverbal expressions of feelings through art enabled families to explore their relationship and communication patterns. The program involved a series of structured, cumulative traditional teachings, topical art experiences, and parent/caregiver information sessions that supported a child's healthy development by strengthening relationships within the extended family and community. The program's goal was to end the intergenerational cycle of abuse and neglect in Aboriginal families by improving parenting skills and strengthening family relationships.

The WCAH *Child and Family Art Project* supported a holistic approach to healing by interweaving art therapy with a broad Aboriginal worldview and such cultural practices as communal meals and group cultural celebrations. Other activities included a homework club. The program also recruited and trained a circle of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis youth and grandparents as ongoing resources for children and parents/caregivers registered in the program.

As part of the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project*, the WCAH identified four promising healing practices with respect to the *Child and Family Art Project*. A combination of traditional and contemporary



therapeutic interventions is a key pillar of healing from the trauma of the Residential Schools. Efforts to **infuse modern therapy methods with a culturally appropriate approach** builds the capacity for a complementary healing team that can effectively promote Aboriginal values and worldviews and contributes to the process of decolonization. There is a need to explore ways to use western and modern therapies in a manner that complements First Nations, Inuit, and Métis cultures. **Elder and extended family involvement** also is considered a key programming component. The participation of Elders and extended family members promotes a culturally safe environment for healing, and the sharing of traditional knowledge and teachings contributes to the process of decolonization.

WCAH recognized the need to ensure that program processes, staff, and environment are always **supportive, encouraging, and non-judgmental**. This promotes a personally safe environment which is a necessary condition for healing. It is also important to ensure that there are **on-site trained emergency support staff and counsellors** ready to address any triggers or emotional outbursts that may arise when addressing the trauma of the Residential School experience. This practice reflects the value of a skilled healing team and an environment that will ensure personal safety.

## Youth Violence Prevention Toolkit, Native Women's Association of Canada

---

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is a national non-profit association with the collective goal to enhance, promote, and foster the social, economic, cultural, and political well-being of First Nations and Métis women. It is an aggregate of 13 Native women's provincial and territorial member associations. The NWAC Youth Council is made up of one female youth from each of the 13 member associations and serves to represent, promote, advocate, empower, protect, and educate young indigenous women of Canada.

NWAC has been working to re-establish the traditional importance of women within Aboriginal societies and to reverse the unequal and normalized relationships of physical and mental violence found in many homes. The *Sisters in Spirit* initiative addresses the disproportionate rates of violence against Aboriginal women and girls. Concerns over violence led the NWAC Youth Council to create the *Youth Violence Prevention Toolkit* in 2007. The original three-year initiative was geared towards youth and service providers.

The centrepiece of the toolkit is information on how to set up a series of comprehensive full-day violence prevention workshops for youth. In a series of "Train the Trainer" type workshops, members of NWAC's Youth Council were trained to facilitate workshops across Canada. These were designed to be delivered interactively in a variety of creative ways with room for flexibility.

The *Youth Violence Prevention Toolkit* includes a facilitator's guide, fact sheets, a feedback form, and a community action guide. The aim is to teach youth to recognize the early signs of violence, to know who or what type of resource or safety programs they can turn to, to learn about appropriate and inappropriate responses, to know about new threats such as date rape drugs, and to feel empowered and motivated to be community leaders in violence prevention in their communities. Dialogue during the workshops is encouraged through the use of imagery, videos, games, and plain-language tools as well as with a PowerPoint presentation that can be modified to fit local needs. The toolkit is designed to be modified to be culturally relevant. For example, the preparation of a community-specific fact sheet on the Residential School experience is suggested. Culturally appropriate activities such as smudging and healing circles are encouraged. Police and community councils are encouraged to share the toolkit with groups and individuals that might benefit from the information.

As part of the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project*, NWAC identified five promising healing practices with respect to the *Youth Violence Prevention Toolkit*. The toolkit was designed by the NWAC Youth Council and highlights the value of **for-youth-by-youth-designed programming**. The strategy helps to ensure

appropriate and effective content and implementation and helps to establish a healing environment of personal and cultural safety. This, in turn, improves program participation, completion, and healing. The use of **culturally appropriate community information materials** in a practical, functional, and plain-language format that uses cultural imagery within the local context is an effective way to engage Aboriginal communities. This strategy helps to incorporate Aboriginal worldviews and values and promotes a healing environment that is culturally safe.





The Legacy of Hope Foundation is grateful to the following communities and organizations that generously contributed their time and wisdom to the *Bridging Our Communities Research Project*, making this publication possible:

Community Therapeutic Healing Program, Eskasoni Mental Health and Social Work Service;  
Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling Program, Wagmatcook First Nations;  
Membertou Wellness Home, Membertou First Nations;  
Musqueam Language Program, Musqueam First Nations;  
Cultural Program, Splatsin Child Care and Learning Centre;  
Tending the Fire Leadership Program, Prairie Spirit Connections Inc.;  
Rankin Inlet Spousal Abuse Counselling Program, Pulaarvik Kablu Friendship Centre;  
Neah Kee Papa Program, Manitoba Métis Federation;  
Family Art Therapy Program, Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health; and  
Youth Violence Prevention Toolkit, Native Women's Association of Canada.

The Healing and Decolonizing: *Bridging Our Communities Toolkit* was produced by the Legacy of Hope Foundation with financial support from Health Canada and Public Safety Canada.

## Healing and Decolonizing: Bridging Our Communities Toolkit

The Legacy of Hope Foundation is a national, charitable organization whose purpose is to educate and create awareness and understanding about the legacy of Residential Schools, including the effects and intergenerational impacts on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, and to support the ongoing healing process of Residential School Survivors. Request a copy of the Healing and Decolonizing: Bridging Our Communities Toolkit from the Legacy of Hope Foundation.

Legacy of Hope Foundation  
75 Albert Street, Suite 801  
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5E7  
T: 613-237-4806 or 877-553-7177

[info@legacyofhope.ca](mailto:info@legacyofhope.ca) [www.legacyofhope.ca](http://www.legacyofhope.ca)

Charitable Registration #: 86347 1520 RR0001

# Blair Debassige

## Biography

Blair Debassige is an artist of the Ojibwe Bear Clan from the M'Chigeeng First Nation (Manitoulin Island, Ontario). He paints with acrylics and oil on canvas, and over the years his work has expanded to other mediums such as birch bark, rawhide, arch paper, shields, drums, and bone breast plates.

Bold, rich and uncompromising colours accent Blair's vision and reputation as a painter. He often paints outside, overshadowed by cedar trees and accompanied by the pounding of waves on the shore. Despite countless invitations to tour his work overseas, Blair rarely leaves his home in M'Chigeeng. Instead, the artist declares that he puts himself into every one of his paintings – so that, no matter where the paintings end up – he can look out through them into the world.

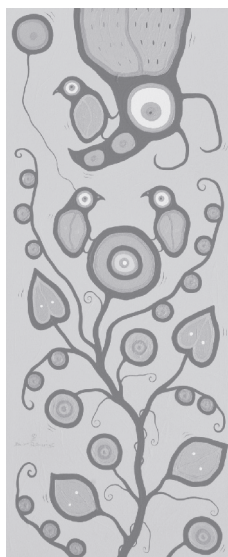
“I paint what is known as Woodland style, but with my own unique sense of color, content and form. My approach to painting is continually evolving as I grow into maturity both as an artist and a man. My paintings express not only my traditions and oral teachings, but sacred symbols and archetypes found in ancient cultures the world over. My painting is a form of lucid dreaming where content and form meld with unconscious forces. Perhaps these are forces of nature, or they are ancient symbols embedded in the human psyche, or simply fragments of dreams. Regardless of their source, they offer viewers a doorway into mythic space where all people are one, and all human striving is toward union with the Creator...Art lifts a veil between what we perceive as 'real', and what is truly real. True art is luminous.”

Blair's art is rooted in the Ojibwe legends he grew up with, and in the language, itself, which is rich with symbolism. Spiritual integrity is intrinsic to Blair's work - painting is his way of paying homage to the spirit world, the traditions and voices of his people. In turn, his wish is that his painting will give those voices shape, colour, and form.

His work has been featured in magazines and in documentary films and television specials in North America and Europe, and has been sold to private collectors all over the world. Permanent collections include those of former Prime Minister Jean Chretien, the Department of Indian Affairs, the Arts Council of Canada, the Royal Ontario Museum, and the Vatican in Rome.



Blue painting:  
Blair Debassige  
Untitled  
Undated  
Acrylic on canvas  
Courtesy of Sara Fryer  
Elements of this work have been used throughout this document.



Orange painting:  
Blair Debassige  
Untitled  
Undated  
Acrylic on canvas  
Courtesy of Charissa Bode  
Elements of this work have been used throughout this document.