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# A holistic aboriginal framework for individual healing

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A Holistic Aboriginal Framework for Individual Healing

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### **Locating the Author**

Aanii, Waase-Gaaboo ndizhnikaaz. Obadjiwaan miinwaa Bawating ndoonjibaa Anishnaabe miinwaa English miinwaa French endaaw. Hello, my name is Waase-Gaaboo. People call me Gus Hill. I come from Sault Ste. Marie and Batchawana Bay in northern Ontario. I have ojibwe (anishnaabe), English and French heritage. I have introduced myself in this way to honour my ancestors, the Creator, and all my relations.

### **Introduction**

It seems that Aboriginal people in Canada have been divided into two distinct groups: traditional and not traditional, with little tolerance for those individuals who find themselves somewhere in between. Rather than align myself with either group, I wish to stand firmly in the middle and talk about what I see as a blending of traditions that rely heavily on Indigenous traditions as well as borrowing some of the teachings from other cultures and disciplines, all contributing to a well-rounded, holistic, Aboriginal Healing Framework. This framework is merely one step in the evolution of our holistic understanding about human problems; it is part theoretical and part practical in its application.

Aboriginal people have, for several decades now, written about the trauma that continues to prevent individuals, families, communities and nations from fully realizing their inherent potential (Abadian, 1999; Antone & Hill, 1994). Dependency and violence have been the proverbial thorn in the sides of Aboriginal groups, while the seduction of urban life and modern convenience have further weakened the interdependent relationships that have traditionally held families, communities and nations together for centuries, despite the influences of colonization (Battiste & Henderson Youngblood, 2001; Lane Jr., Bopp, Bopp & Norris, 2002). The current struggle has been to balance adherence to traditional family values with self-determination and

this is most evident in the youngest of our generations, who are seemingly farthest removed from those healing traditions and teachings: Seven Grandfathers' Teachings (White, 1988), Medicines (Manitowabi & Shawande, 2011; Martin-Hill, 2003) , Ceremonies (Hill, 2008; Hill & Coady, 2003; Manitowabi & Shawande, 2011), Elders (Hill, 2008), and Spirit (Benton-Banai, 1988; Manitowabi & Shawande, 2011). What I propose here is not a panacea, rather a set of teachings and practices that offers a reference point for those who work in healing capacities, hoping to address these cultural ailments; a straightforward simple holistic healing model for individuals.

The following is my description of holism that draws on the collective wisdom of Indigenous people who have been a part of my healing journey, and I theirs, and provides a framework for healing of the self within an Indigenous worldview. This model also draws on literature that examines the spiritual, emotional, physical and mental aspects of the individual self (Absolon, 2010; Nabigon, 2006).

### **The Medicine Wheel and Holism**

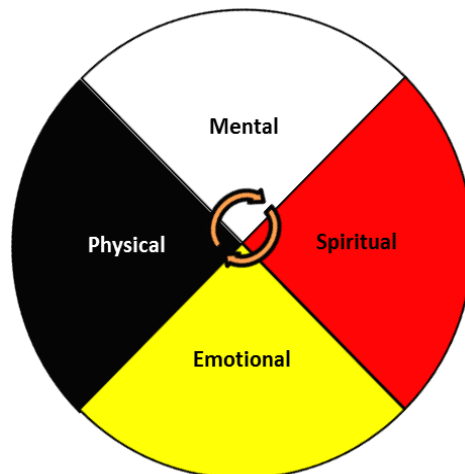
One of the main representations of Indigenous holism is the circle, which has been used to construct the Medicine Wheel (Absolon, 2010; Nabigon, 2006; Nabigon & Mawhiney, 1996; Verniest, 2006). The medicine wheel that I will be sharing is comprised of the four cardinal directions; east (red), south (yellow), west (black), north (white). These four colours represent the four races of man; Indigenous people from the Americas, Africa, Europe and Asia. In those four directions the four aspects of the self are located, with the balance and harmony located at the centre: spiritual (east), emotional (south), physical (west) and mental (north) (please refer to Figure 5-1).

In many Aboriginal cultures, the Medicine Wheel journey begins in the east and moves

clockwise in continuous cycles of healing throughout one's life, and so shall this description of the medicine wheel (Bopp, Bopp, Brown & Lane Jr., 1984; Morrisseau, 1998; Nabigon, 2006; Nabigon & Mawhiney, 1996).

Traditional healing requires a critical understanding of the self, as well as self-in-relation to context and others (Antone & Hill, 1990). Each aspect of the self requires careful and specific attention in order to attend to individual wellness as one strives for balance and harmony (Bopp et al., 1984; Morrisseau, 1998; Nabigon, 2006; Nabigon & Mawhiney, 1996). Each aspect of self is intricately interconnected to the others and they are parts of the same whole. The concept of holism is an intricate part of Indigenous culture (Bopp et al., 1984; Morrisseau, 1998; Nabigon, 2006; Nabigon & Mawhiney, 1996). Trauma and illness, resulting from the effects of colonization, are also holistic and affect all four parts of the self (Manitowabi & Shawande, 2011). Healing; therefore, must address issues of the spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental aspects of the self (Lane Jr. et al., 2002; Manitowabi & Shawande, 2011).

**Figure 4.1: Individual Medicine Wheel**



### **The Eastern Direction**

The eastern direction represents spiritual healing. It must be noted here that spirituality and spiritual healing are herein distinguished from religion and religious healing. Spirituality, for the purposes of this work, is defined as the inherently personal, deep, inner connection with the Creator and all of Creation (Carroll, 1998). This connection can never be severed, cannot be given nor taken away, and does not require a specific place, time, or group of others to practice or nurture. Therefore, the individual can experience spirituality in a ubiquitous manner. Religion, while commonly understood as a means of expressing or practicing spirituality is inherently social. Constructed by a group of people around a belief, religions commonly require a specific location and time (Carroll, 1998).

In North American Indigenous cultures, the spiritual aspect of the self is that aspect that relates to Creation, spirits, ancestors, the spirit world, and the Creator, on a transcendental level. Indigenous people believe that we are spirits in a physical world (Dumont, 1988), relating to the spirits of other sacred parts of Creation such as animals, plants, rocks, water and each other (Bopp, et al., 1984). In the Medicine Wheel model, it is in the east where the individual needs to connect or reconnect with Creation and the Creator. This encompasses all aspects of Creation surrounding the individual, including animate objects such as people, animals, and guiding or protective spirits, as well as inanimate objects such as Grandfathers (rocks), trees, the earth under foot, the sky overhead, and the water that provides life for all beings.

The east is where the individual needs to use prayer, ceremonies and rituals to transcend the physical and mental worlds to communicate with the spiritual world. In the east, it is crucial for the individual to begin to learn how to honor her or his spirit. This means fasting and feasting

for her or his spirit, fasting and feasting her or his namesake, and nurturing her or his spirit at ceremonies, and through the use of medicines that connect us with spirit. Spiritual Indigenous peoples believe that the spirit journeys while the physical self is at rest (i.e., sleeping), and returns at the moment of conscious awakening (Dumont, 1988). Similarly, when a person drinks alcohol or uses substances, the spirit leaves the individual, only to return when the individual puts down the substance and ‘picks up the pipe’. ‘Picking up the pipe’ means that the individual has committed to Walking the Red Road, an Indigenous traditional lifestyle free of toxic substances which alter the physical connection of the person to Creation and the body’s ability to host that individual’s spirit (Pierce & Rhine, 1995).

### **The Eastern Direction in Practice with Indigenous Individuals.**

The role of the Helper is to initially help locate a place where the individual can go to connect with Creation, to whatever extent is feasible, then to show the individual how to achieve this connection through prayers to the Creator.

Perhaps the most challenging role of the helper in spiritual work is to guide the individual find, and then walk, The Red Road (Pierce & Rhine, 1995). While toxic substances such as alcohol and tobacco may be legal, easy to obtain, and socially sanctioned in both urban and rural settings, these materials make the body an inhospitable place for the spirit and need to be avoided. By providing access to support (AA, drug rehabilitation, and medical intervention), teachings, traditional healing programs (Manitowabi & Shawande, 2011), and alternatives (activities such as Powwows where alcohol has no role), the helper can aid the individual to keep their body healthy, and keep traditional medicines such as tobacco, sage, sweetgrass, and cedar sacred.

The helper must facilitate introductions to Elders, who will serve to guide both the helper and the individual receiving help, as well as offer teachings about self and culture. Additionally, the helper can escort the individual to ceremonies that will serve their purpose in keeping the individual on the red road.

### **The Southern Direction**

The next direction is the south which is the direction of emotional healing. This is the time for the individual to acknowledge, accept, embrace, and nurture her or his emotional self. People often neglect their emotional selves by utilizing what Anna Freud (1966) outlined as defense mechanisms: denying, repressing, rationalizing, displacing, sublimating or innately defending themselves in some other way (Freud, 1966; Monte, 1991). The emotional aspect of healing the self is particularly important in contemporary society because it is the aspect of the self that is neglected (personally) and avoided (professionally) the most by practitioners who utilize Euro-western psychotherapy (Hill & Coady, 2003; Monte, 1991).

The emotional aspect of the self is the feeling or affective aspect of the self that allows us to relate to other parts of Creation. Indigenous people believe that our emotions make us human. The capacity for emotional relating is common across other parts of Creation as well. Bearing that in mind, traditional teachings tell us that we are the last element in Creation; the guardians of all Creation. All other parts of Creation give up their lives to sustain the two-legged creatures (humans). In the end, humans are also the only part of Creation that does not balance with other parts so we must be careful to maintain that balance within ourselves, and to honour all other aspects of Creation. The emotional aspect of the self is fragile, and requires careful attention, constant nurturing, and regular expression and release (Lane Jr. et al, 2002).



One method of emotional healing is a process called ‘discharging’ (Lane Jr. et al, 2002), herein referred to as ‘letting go’. Such a process allows individuals, both clients and practitioners, to "acknowledge the harm they have experienced and discharge their feelings of grief, anger and despair" (Bopp & Lane Jr., 2000, pp. 32). Individuals seeking emotional healing need to tell their stories in safe and trusting environments in order to move past the intense emotions toward a new understanding of their selves and their purpose (Bopp & Lane Jr., 2000). While talking is one method of emotional healing (Graveline, 1998; Said, 1993), it is generally insufficient to heal the pains and traumas of a majority of Indigenous people because the mental aspect of the self keeps the emotional aspect in check; thereby, inhibiting expression.

There are seven natural ways of emotional discharge and healing in Indigenous cultures: shaking, crying, laughing, sweating, voicing (talking, singing, hollering, yelling, screaming, etc.), kicking, and hitting. All of these need to be done in a constructive manner so as to not harm another spirit. These seven natural ways of healing generally occur in conjunction with one another, and the process of letting go calls all seven ways into service.

The process of letting go is particularly useful when the individual suffered trauma in the early part of life, and a lump appears in the throat each time the individual tries to talk. That lump is a physical response to an emotional blockage that needs to be removed or worked through. There is an analogy to help people synthesize this process of letting go; that of a glass that is placed under a dripping faucet. The drips are likened to emotions that the self has experienced, and accumulate from day to day, filling the glass. The glass is likened to the soul, or the place where all of the self’s emotions are stored, repressed, or bottled up. Eventually, the glass will fill and overflow, but even then it only loses a little bit of water at a time. These little bits of water

that flow over the edges represent the moments in the self's life when she or he involuntarily cries at such things as a sad film, familiar sound, taste, smell or other sensory perception that may trigger a memory. People often apologize for crying, but fail to realize that it is merely an overflowing glass (soul) that has filled to capacity and can no longer handle any further drips (emotions); it must overflow. What the individual really needs to do is completely empty the glass. The drips will continue forever, but with increased emotional awareness the glass no longer needs to repeatedly fill to capacity. Letting go is a continuous process of emptying the glass.

### **The Southern Direction in Practice with Indigenous Individuals.**

The process of letting go is a challenging one and not to be taken lightly. This process requires the facilitation of a deeply trusted person, or persons, and is best done immersed in nature, near water, because of the powerful spiritual and healing forces of the water and connection, or re-connection, with nature. However, the setting is less important than the process and the competence of the facilitator; therefore, a safe and comfortable setting is a minimum requirement. Engaging in the process of letting go requires the individual to voice at the top of her or his lungs until she or he has no more breath. The individual is prompted to yell, scream nameless sounds, or holler words and names, if the healing needs to be directed toward a specific person, process, or place. For example, survivors of residential school have yelled "No more!" repeatedly, which voices her or his repressed anger/refusal to the repeated abuses they suffered (Pierce & Rhine, 1995). The facilitators' role here is to prompt, encourage, support, and even antagonize the client to push through the mental barriers of releasing emotions. This "throat-level voicing" begins the process, and is marked by light eye-watering and mucous production. The

individual immediately repeats this again, putting more energy into the yell, scream or holler (Lane Jr. et al, 2002; Pierce & Rhine, 1995).

After several repetitions, the throat-level voicing moves to a deeper voicing that is called “chest-level voicing.” This requires even greater exertion, marked by increased tearing, headache, profuse sweating, intense shaking, and possible vomiting. All of these are the physical self’s way of purging all of the emotional, spiritual, and physical toxins that have been stored by the individual.

The individual will now feel an intense desire to quit or give up. This is where the facilitator becomes increasingly important to the process, and needs to push the individual to go deeper by exerting more and more energy, to encourage the individual to find the bravery to face the emotions that have surfaced. Common expressions at this point relate to the fear of facing the self and long-held trauma; individuals often utter “I can’t” or “It hurts”. As the individual breaks through this blockage, the voice often gets lost, both figuratively and literally. The individual will need to exert more effort than ever before to find where it has become trapped in the depths of blocked emotions. The individual continues to yell, scream, or holler with all of the self in order to move to the deepest level of “gut-level voicing.”

Once the individual has reached gut-level voicing, an inanimate object may be constructively introduced to be hit or kicked, because anger and hurt are often exhibited as rage and need to be expressed in an uninhibited manner. As the individual enters this level of voicing, she or he may appear to be possessed by some force or spirit, as she or he is freeing her or his own spirit from the shackles of emotion that have gripped the self for a long time (Meawasige, 1995). As the voice comes back, it is deeper, and does not sound like the individual’s usual

voice; this is the individual's inner voice. The individual has now reached the soul, where all of the good and bad emotions are stored, finally tapping the source of emotional pain. Sustained voicing is needed in order that all of the emotions are completely let go.

At this point in the process, the individual will now be at her or his lowest level of stamina, and may collapse, but the individual has effectively let go of the emotions that inhibited the individual's inner voice from speaking, singing, or expressing. The facilitator is now completely responsible for taking care of the individual; securing the individual in a sleeping bag or bed and keeping vigil throughout the night. The individual will awake feeling renewed, but also depleted, and therefore be extremely vulnerable and emotionally fragile. Now, however, the individual is now ready to talk about the trauma, abuse, or burden that has caused the imbalance and disharmony (Nabigon & Mawhiney, 1996). After the emotional aspect of the letting go process is complete, the individual must engage in mindful renewal including attention to the physical and mental aspects of the self.

### **The Western Direction**

The next direction is the west which represents physical healing, and requires that balance and harmony exist among the four elements of hydration (water), breathing (air), diet (food), and exercise (movement). Each element is equally important; this list does not represent a hierarchy. In the absence of any one element, the individual could not survive (Maracle, 1999).

In traditional Indigenous cultures, water was, and continues to be treated as sacred medicine; the primary source of hydration. While there are also teas (medicinal and flavoured), syrups, berry drinks, and food sources, most hydration came directly from water. In current Canadian culture, there is a trend back towards drinking plain water, and away from the refined

and sweetened juices, sodas, and energy drinks which have become so popular (Batmanghelidj, 2003; Kirschmann, 2006; Maracle, 1999).

It has been well researched, advertised, and promoted as a part of achieving, and maintaining, optimal health that most people need to drink more water (Batmanghelidj, 2003; Kirschmann, 2006). There is a fine balance between hypohydration (too little) and hyperhydration (too much), as each is equally dangerous. If an individual does not drink enough water, or dehydrates, the body cannot properly digest food and absorb nutrients. If too much water is consumed, the body hyperhydrates, and is flushed of the elements required for good health. The ideal situation, euhydration (just right), is to drink slightly more than you expend each day; a range of 8-10 cups or 2-2.5 litres (Batmanghelidj, 2003; Kirschmann, 2006). During days of intense physical activity, excessive heat or cold, following the process of letting go, the individual needs to consume approximately one gallon of water throughout the day.

As well as not drinking enough water, most people are guilty of not breathing properly; too shallowly and in short breaths (Farhi, 1996; Johnson, 2012; Kirschmann, 2006; Maracle, 1999). The proper way to breathe is in full, deep inhalations, allowing your abdomen to expand, and then exhale at an even rate as the abdomen naturally contracts. This strengthens both the diaphragm and lungs. By filling the bottom portion of the lungs, deep breathing increases oxygenation to the extremities of the body such as the arms, legs and the brain (Farhi, 2000, 1996; Johnson, 2012; Maracle, 1999). Breathing exercises of the kind used in yoga, dance, singing, and meditation are but a few ways to develop healthy breathing techniques (Farhi, 2000; Johnson, 2012; Kirschmann, 2006; Maracle, 1999).

The next aspect of physical health is diet. There are two primary ways to approach diet in

this world: biospherical and biospecific (Maracle, 1999). Biospherical eating simply means eating according to geography (Maracle, 1999). This type of eating is best summed up by the adage, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." It entails eating the foods of the culture indigenous to the area you inhabit. Alternately, biospecific eating means eating foods of your own indigenous culture no matter where you are in the world (Maracle, 1999). In this context, eating according to the Creator's gifts - from the land, the sky, and the water - is important for health (Adelson, 1998). The following (biospecific) diet is a part of this healing model.

For Indigenous people, a biospecific diet mean eating foods that are indigenous to the Americas, or foods that would have been eaten by our Indigenous Ancestors. These include foods that are high in fibre such as beans, blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries and red mulberries, which are also rich in healthy oils, vitamins and nutrients (Adelson, 1998). It also means eating meats such as buffalo, deer, moose, caribou, salt and fresh water fish, goose, duck, turkey and other game fowl, that are low in fats and free of artificially introduced hormones (Adelson, 1998). Other foods such as maple syrup, wild rice, sweet potatoes, peppers, corn, squash, and dark green roughage such as chard, broccoli, dandelions, and lettuces Indigenous to North America, are also part of this diet. It is important for indigenous people to know where their food comes from, and to honour the spirits of their harvest and kill (Adelson, 1998). A good rule of thumb is to eat the way the world is: 75% water, and 90% green (Kirschmann, 2006; Maracle, 1999). Notably absent from the foregoing description are alcohol, refined sugars, white potatoes, refined wheat products, fried foods, pork, chocolate, coffee, tea, dairy, and to a lesser extent beef and chicken. Most of these items are considered toxic to North American Indigenous peoples (Adelson, 1998; Maracle, 1999). While individuals may experience difficulty adhering to

such a diet, it remains crucial to holistic wellness.

The last aspect of physical healing and health is movement, or exercise. In contemporary society, this can take the form of resistance training, aerobics, yoga, pilates, zumba, expressive dance, hiking, swimming, walking, running and myriad other activities. The human species is not static; rather, we are meant to be dynamic and evolving. If we stop moving, we tend to die, or at least shorten our lifespans. Lack of exercise and healthy diets are the leading causes of heart attacks and a host of other ailments. (Kirschmann, 2006). As Kirschmann notes, "By taking yourself from a sedentary [to an active] state you can, in effect, reduce your biological age by 10 or 20 years" (Kirschmann, 2006, p. 7).

### **The Western Direction in Practice with Indigenous Individuals.**

A good example of physical movement is found in the powwow trail. Thousands of people begin dancing in the early summer and by following the powwow trail, dance all summer long until fall comes. Today, powwow dancers are able to dance year round with the advent of socials and indoor powwows hosted by community groups and educational institutions. This idea of movement, much like the process of letting go, requires commitment and continued exertion for it to be effective.

Physical stamina and strength have always been celebrated and honored by Indigenous cultures. Powwow dancers, sundancers, lacrosse players and other athletes (including historically, the great horseback riders of the plains) demonstrate the importance and power of movement. It is time for physical stamina and strength to once again be honoured and celebrated by Indigenous peoples.

The physical aspect of the self is that which relates to the body; it is the vessel for the

spirit (Dumont, 1988). Indigenous people believe that our bodies die long before our spirits (Dumont, 1988). Our bodies are our greatest indicators of illness and much of what we experience as illness in a spiritual, emotional, or mental form manifests itself physically, or somatically. The Creator has given us somatic gifts to remind us that our bodies are sacred. If we disrespect our bodies, our spirits will leave them; conversely, when we stop disrespecting our bodies, our spirits will return. The physical aspect of the self possesses inherent protective strategies just as our other aspects of the self. When pushed to, or beyond, its limits the physical aspect will shut down.

The task of the helper is to be a role model in physical wellness and balance. Where the individual is ignorant of physical wellness, or apprehensive about trying new things, it is the helper who must act as a gentle guide and teacher. Activities such as food shopping at local markets, grocery stores, health food stores or local farms can become critical components of the helping relationship. In some cases, hunting may be a feasible activity between the helper and the individual. Nevertheless, the helper can teach the individual about the connection between the spirit of food and the spirit of self. Honouring the spirit of the animals and plants that sustain the individual is critical to physical wellness. The two elements that are the easiest to teach are hydration and the relationship with the spirit of water, and breathing for vitality and stress reduction. Lastly, the helper can lead the individual to activity, and a more dynamic lifestyle. The role of the helper is not to intimidate, but to inspire.

### **The Northern Direction**

The next direction is the north, which represents mental healing. It is in the north that the individual needs to think, reason, articulate ideas, reflect, make sense of, and find meaning in



their surrounding environment and experiences. It is important that the mental aspect of the self is given sufficient stimulation and proper rest. Most individuals have a difficult time shutting out their thoughts and properly relaxing the mind so that it can fully rest, especially in our fast-paced, digital age. True mental healing more resembles memory work than psychotherapy, as well as some educational goal setting (Assembly of First Nations, 1994). Memory work helps individuals to remember past trauma(s) in order to work through the cognitive processes associated with the traumatic event(s) (AFN, 1994). Compared to psychotherapy, the distinction is that psychotherapy ambitiously attempts to deal with both the cognitions *and* emotions associated with the traumatic events and often fails on the emotional front (Frank & Frank, 1991). There is a great deal of healing work to be done in the mind because society tends to force individuals to think about things too much, often reaching the point of overstimulation and confusion.

Individuals need to continuously challenge what they know, learn new things, change thought patterns (so that the mind maintains a dynamic place in the self), and positively stimulate the mental part of the self. But, they also need to rest and engage in non-cognitive activities as a means of restoring balance. It is important in this context, however, to guard against becoming overwhelmed by negativity and negative media uptake. The news is one example, whether it is accessed by radio, in newspapers, or on television. It is important to examine information critically; all news can be interpreted so that there is less bias in the actual story, especially if received through trusted sources.

The last aspect of healing in the mental part of the self is the ultimate goal of generating wisdom. Wisdom comes through one's life experiences and the shared experiences of others,

through which individuals learn deeply about the environment around them. It is about sharing knowledge and connecting with other mentally stimulating parts of Creation.

### **The Northern Direction in Practice with Indigenous Individuals.**

The mental aspect of the self is that aspect of the self that attempts to make meaning out of sensory input gleaned from life experiences. Indigenous people believe that our ability to reason and use logic makes humans stewards of Creation. We are gifted with the responsibilities of understanding balance and harmony, as well as of guarding Creation and protecting Mother Earth. The mental aspect of the self is also blessed with gifts of memory and knowledge. These gifts allow us to pass on our knowledge so that the collective wisdom of our Ancestors survives forever. According to Mi'kmaq oral tradition, there are five physical senses: sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. There are also six non-physical senses: thinking, memory, imagination, dreaming, visioning, and spirit-traveling (Graveline, 1998, pp. 77) which make up the mental self. The capacity of these non-physical senses is only released by quieting and relaxing the rational mind and moving into another state of consciousness (Graveline, 1998, pp. 77). Euro-western science and study of the psyche have taught us that the mind can do amazing things to ensure its protection and survival (Freud, 1966). Indeed, it is responsible for making sense and meaning out of the letting go process. It is the mental aspect of the self that works through the memories of trauma that have become separated from the emotional experience of trauma. By reflecting on traumas of the past, and simultaneously forgiving them (Lewis, 2005) the individual is able to generate healing and coping strategies through which the whole self becomes free to move toward bimaadiziiwin (Gross, 2002; Hart, 1999).

The role of the helper is to foster a safe, caring, nurturing, and gentle relationship in

which the individual can express, explore, engage and emancipate the self through self-reflection and critical self-analysis. The individual requires a guide in the form of the helper to make sense and make meaning of the other three aspects of the self and the extensive healing process that each has undergone. It is also the role of the helper to answer questions related to the why, how, when, where, and what of the healing process.

### **Conclusion**

Each aspect of the self is important; no one can be greater than the others. There is an inherent balance between the four aspects of the self, as well as a complex, perpetual interplay among them (Nabigon & Mawhiney, 1996). Sleep, rest and relaxation are necessary in all four aspects of the self in order to achieve and maintain balance and harmony. Indigenous people believe that illness arises out of imbalance and/or disharmony among the four aspects of the self; therefore, the self must work to restore balance and harmony in order to restore holistic health. This model is aimed at healing what Bopp, Bopp, and Lane Jr. (2003) call “root causes.” The root cause of much illness in Indigenous communities is, as described earlier, intergenerational trauma (Bopp et al., 2003).

In this paper I have presented a holistic model of practice with people who struggle with various symptoms of trauma-induced illness. One of the tenets of this particular model is that it works at addressing root causes, rather than symptoms. For example, an alcoholic person who assaults his or her partner is not to be viewed as an “abusive drunk,” but rather, an individual in a great deal of pain, replete with personal trauma, inherited intergenerational trauma, a loss of language, loss of identity, loss of land base, loss of purpose, intense shame about who he or she is culturally, and bombarded with negative and/or sensationalized media imagery or portrayals

(Antone & Hill, 1994). In this scenario, the abused partner also needs healing and should not be blamed for the individual's addiction. If we view people who may at some point seek help holistically, while also taking into account all of the relevant history and the contexts of their lives, we come to realize that they are not separate from us, just in a bad place. They deserve to be treated with love and kindness, no matter what their past holds (Bopp & Lane Jr., 2000). This model is intended to serve as an effective and authentic means of helping people work through some of their root causes and move toward a holistically well life of bimaadiziiwin (Gross, 2002; Hart, 1999). All my relations.

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