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# Aistimatoom: the embodiment of Blackfoot prayer as wellness

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***AISTIMATOOM: THE EMBODIMENT OF BLACKFOOT PRAYER AS  
WELLNESS***

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B.A., University of Lethbridge, 2003

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*AISTIMATOOM*: THE EMBODIMENT OF BLACKFOOT PRAYER AS WELLNESS

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## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my mother, Sandra Big Bull Grier, *Iikstonanatsis* (Thin Needles). May you find the peace that you have always deserved in the heavens, alongside your family who now can be in peace there with you, if not here on earth.

## Abstract

The purpose of this thesis was to identify culturally appropriate means of engaging with Blackfoot and Indigenous clients seeking counselling. Blackfoot prayer is symbolic of the entire sacred worldview and universe of the Blackfoot people. This research intended for a holistic understanding of wellness to emerge from the study of *Aatsimoiskaan* (Prayer). This thesis employed an Indigenous research paradigm to ensure that the methodology was culturally appropriate. The research question was, “What does prayer say about wellbeing?” The researcher interviewed four members of sacred societies within the Blackfoot Confederacy. The interviews were qualitative and interpreted hermeneutically. The research identified five aspects of Blackfoot wellness to guide clients towards living a meaningful Indigenous life. Prayer provides practitioners with: 1) key ingredients of Blackfoot citizenry; 2) co-creation and autonomy in self healing; 3) decolonization of identity, self, and life; 4) conscious purpose; and 5) healthy identity formation. The findings of this research have practical use for counsellors who work directly with Indigenous clients. Any changes in practice and program delivery, which include these findings, will result in better outcomes for Indigenous, specifically Blackfoot, people seeking counsel.

*Keywords:* wellness, prayer, Aboriginal worldview

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## Chapter 1: *Kiitaa Kiitsa Niikii*, Setting the Context

In the Blackfoot culture, *inapuntsii* refers to “profess one’s successes” (A. Pard, personal communication, October, 2011). Whether it takes place in a public domain or a more intimate setting, this act of revelation refers to sharing with others the individual’s fortunate incidences and to revealing what the person has overcome, their challenges, the overcoming of barriers or what they have been doing with their life. Pard explains that these reference the person’s character and that the person is entitled to speak on certain aspects of life. The methodology section of this thesis describes Indigenous worldview; a worldview that respects an integrated way of being that is congruent with the way this research was conducted. Therefore, Blackfoot custom is relevant as this Indigenous researcher “confesses” or *kiitaa kiitsa niikii*, tells a story.

To tell a story is to provide the reader with an understanding as to how the thesis was manifested. As the Blackfoot culture stipulates, one must have a relationship and authority to speak to issues on behalf of others. To conduct arbitrary research or decision making, is to breach this relational protocol. I would like to demonstrate how I have the right to tell this story.

When I am asked about the topic of my study, it often catches Blackfoot people off guard because our sacred societal knowledge is protected. I am then obligated as a Blackfoot person to demonstrate how I came to this topic. Indigenous methodology states that a research topic must be practical for people it studies (Wilson, 2008) so this discussion also must include what I plan to do with the findings.

Indigenous cultures around the world have survived because the Indigenous research done in their communities was practical and useful to the communities in which it was done. The transmission of knowledge in oral cultures is purposeful through the active engagement in its world, therefore the research must actively engage with the people it is to benefit.

The thesis evolved from my subjective experience as an academic and professional. My professional history includes psychology and healing, thus my entry into the discipline of counselling psychology. Throughout the succession of this writing, I will interject aspects of my life and subjectivity and spirit to this writing.

In Blackfoot, *kiitaa kiitsa nikii* refers to recalling coup stories, which are stories of triumphs or successes. The focus on the positive is a dominant theme in the thesis, derived from the participant discussions. Therefore, I will recall my coups and how I came to be able to talk about these things.

To begin, my goal in understanding colonialism was to identify its impacts on the Indigenous psyches; this has been a focus of my study for over a decade. As a practitioner can appreciate, one needs to understand what they are dealing with to understand paths of reconciliation thereafter. I was educated personally, professionally and academically to appreciate the impacts of colonization and its correlation with these maladaptive behaviours; however these behaviours do not define the culture and worldview of the Indigenous people. My experiences were fairly typical of other Indigenous experiences; the similarities thus allow me not go too far beyond family for references and examples.

For over a decade, I have been a guest lecturer at the Banff School of Management's 'Inherent Right to Indigenous Governance' program. This program promotes sovereignty through empowering Indigenous peoples and communities. My contribution in the program is reiteration of colonial impacts on Indigenous psyches resulting from cultural genocide<sup>1</sup>. My work was to articulate the impacts of colonization and its influence as a barrier in reaching sovereignty. This discussion helps the students comprehend and address the social and psychological impacts of colonialism. This helps "business" within Indian Country<sup>2</sup> to progress without fewer emotional infractions within First Nations infrastructure and capacity building.

Other professional experiences have afforded me the opportunity to deeply appreciate and empathize for Indigenous rebuilding efforts. This appreciation guided my journey into the political arena, where I am currently finishing a 4-year term as an elected leader in my Indigenous community. I plan to immediately return to my therapeutic career thereafter. After receiving an undergraduate degree in psychology, I worked for several years in community programming before entering the University of Lethbridge's Masters of Education Counselling Psychology graduate program. It became evident through my work that I needed to ensure that I could ethically, competently, and professionally serve my clients. The people I was being exposed to in my practice presented with increasingly severe behavioural issues.

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<sup>1</sup> The "genocide" referred to here refers to the criteria that is met under the United Nations seven criterion to define genocide, in which Canadian First Nation Historical Traumas do.

<sup>2</sup> Indian Country: a term Indigenous groups associate with a larger pan-Indigenous community, regardless of tribal affiliation.

My decade plus years lecturing in Banff stimulated intimate participant discussion about the grief and trauma prevalent in their families, communities, and lives.

Participants disclosed they were overwhelmed with the need to survive as Indigenous beings. However, the people's success with recovery and reconciliation personally lay with their Indigenous worldview and spirituality. This enabled Indigenous people to survive the wake of cultural genocide. I was beginning to grasp that spirituality was a cornerstone that provided tools, resources, and supports within Indigenous communities. These spiritual resources were creating the resiliency but at first glance, did not appear to be clinical. Yet these tools were culturally appropriate ways of coping with the aftermath of cultural genocide.

These same sentiments have echoed through my professional career in community programming within my own First Nation (*Ahpostii Piikani*) as well as the greater Treaty Seven area, and throughout Indian Country<sup>i</sup>. Clients, community workers, and Indigenous advocates have continuously stated that to decolonize the people's maladaptive behaviours, there must be collective and individual spiritual engagement in healing. This reflects an indication of Indigenous recovery.

More recently, my work in the University of Lethbridge Addictions Counselling Degree Program and Native American Studies Department supported these observations and suggestions. Indigenous students and faculty frequently discussed addictions programming and community development as well as their personal experiences with these. They too, found spirituality and prayer as sources of resiliency and healing. The classes were largely Indigenous and I, as an Indigenous scholar, led these discussions where I focused on Indigenous specific issues.

Personally, decolonization is my life's inquiry. This has led me to the prayer circles that I am honoured to participate in today. I have raised my children to embrace the cultural teachings that I was never privileged to have; my eldest son is currently being apprenticed in Blackfoot spirituality. To do this, as a mother is the most important thing I can give my children to sustain and support them to be proud Blackfoot people in today's world. This prayer circle provides my son with the pillars of strength and guidance he needs to sustain himself amidst the stressors of life. Perhaps, most importantly this spiritual path is shaping his identity positively; he is now 20 years of age and has been drug and alcohol-free his entire life. That alone is significant.

I was raised by a single mother, who always had to make ends meet in the beginning of her life as a parent. As a student of residential schools, and a child of two parents who were "full product"<sup>3</sup> residential school survivors as she would refer to their history as (although they survived only until ages 48 and 52 years) left her grappling with her ideas about prayer and spirituality. The intergenerational impacts of residential schools left my family without a religion, among other things. However, spirituality was present and significant in times of need, such as in times of loss or when my mother received spiritual warning about our family.

As an adult, my spiritual life blossomed. After my mother's passing several years ago, I connected with her through a means I had never imagined. My relationship with her being was now in a spiritual relationship and the relationship deepened with my evolving spiritual understanding and knowledge of prayer.

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<sup>3</sup>"Full product" is a term my mother used to refer to Indigenous students who endured their entire school aged lives – for example – in residential schools.

Spiritual relationships holds seemingly simple truths that are largely absent from many Indigenous peoples lives today. These connections are often overlooked in day-to-day political and programming scrambles within a First Nation, yet the connections can provide deeply meaningful guidance as I have learned personally. My mother, peers, family, and community have taught me that to simply “help” others is our most important virtue as Blackfoot people. To take care of others, the people, is a role we must continually strive to fulfill in one way or another. This traditional value of collective compassion was illustrated in the stories I was taught by my family and community. I saw this practice in the Blackfoot culture and its values emphasize the importance of helping. My mother would always share stories of how my great-grandfather, Willy Big Bull, owned one of the few wagons in the community and would gather firewood and water for the people of *Piikani* out of his generous nature. He never asked for anything in return he simply helped those in need because he had something to offer to people who were without. My mother continually shared these stories of generosity, to demonstrate to my siblings and me, of our duty to be kind to others and to be compassionate to those in need. My mother continued to model these qualities, helping the people in her work in the child welfare system. There, her goal was to keep the children within their communities and with their families. Her health was her least concern, as she selflessly gave her life to others. Her endless teachings to others and me are still shared with me today as people tell me how she affected their lives positively.

I was reminded of these values when I became involved in the spiritual circles as an adult. I observed how these traditional people endlessly gave their time, energy, and material resources to help others. Although there were no salaries and no written policies

to guide them, these traditional people filled roles within our communities to help selflessly and endlessly just as they always have.

My mother fulfilled her life by helping others. By her example, she transferred this way of being. This is the basis for the path I have chosen to pursue in my profession and what I will explore in this thesis – to help. This research stems from a culmination of my personal, professional, and intellectual knowledge and experiences. This research inquires into how healing is connected to spirituality, relationships, and prayer for the Blackfoot people, and possibly for Indigenous people more generally.

The following section outlines the impacts of colonization for Indigenous people of North America, more specifically Canada. Each First Nation is unique; however, the residual effects of colonialism are similar. The impacts in each community differ due to their pace of, and approaches to, recovery.

To understand where one is going, one must understand where one has been and this is the purpose of the next chapter.

## **Chapter 2: *Ahp Pahk Skoo Kinaan*, Colonization**

Since contact between North American Indigenous people and the European settlers, Indigenous spirituality and philosophies have long competed with an Anglo-European, Judeo-Christian paternalistic worldview (Ross, 1992). Little Bear describes the competition as “jagged worldviews colliding” where colonization attempts to “maintain a singular social order by means of force and law” (2000, p. 77). That particular social order and law was foreign to Indigenous people and they experience oppression and discrimination as a result.



*Ahp pahk skoo kinaan* refers to the time when “white people came and knocked us off our life path” (A. Pard, personal communication, October, 2011). This crude translation depicts the “jagged worldviews colliding” and the times when Indigenous people were no longer able to be Indigenous, whether in their laws, governance, and spirituality. Pard describes a time in Blackfoot history when the practice of Blackfoot prayers and spirituality were outlawed and resulting decline in the ceremonies and people’s participation in them.

“No other population in Canada’s history has endured such a deliberate, comprehensive, and prolonged assault on their human rights as that of the Aboriginal people.” (Chansonneuve, 2007, p. 5) This opening quote for a final report by the Canadian government’s Aboriginal Healing Foundation is in response to the distressing addiction rates of Canada’s Indigenous people and how those rates are related to the experience of residential schools and colonization.

Residential schools were a result of a formal governmental policy that was enacted to assimilate Indigenous people. The current Canadian Prime Minister presented a historical apology for the lengthy assaults that Indigenous people experienced through the residential schools. The reactions from Indigenous people that followed have been mixed. Many questioned whether the apology was a sincere effort of reconciliation or if it was to save Canada’s image globally, because the continuation of assaults through policies that marginalize Indigenous people are still present (A. Pard, personal communication, June 2013).

To better understand the effects of the residential school on Indigenous communities, Allan Pard uses the analogy of domestic abuse. If there is a denial of

spousal abuse, there can be no awareness, no recovery, and no supports to aid in the situation; the abuse simply continues. Canadian society exacerbates the residential school impacts and colonization for Indigenous people through continual denial or misunderstanding. Indigenous people hope to educate average Canadians accurately about how they can support Indigenous recovery from the residential schools and their impacts, and to help remove barriers that create animosity.

Meanwhile the federal government continues to make unilateral and arbitrary decisions regarding Indigenous livelihoods. This was exemplified in the passing of the recent and controversial Omnibus Bill, better known as Bill C-45 that brought Indigenous people out in the masses to protest its implementation (Redwell, 2012). This bill breaches constitutionally protected Indigenous rights and will result in environmental harm to Indigenous traditional territories that in turn will impact their livelihoods and their cultures. The Supreme Court of Canada created law that required provinces and industry to meaningfully consult and accommodate Indigenous people with regard to industrial developments on their traditional lands (Chambers & Blood, 2009). These policies were interpreted and developed to marginalize Indigenous rights and access to natural resource development, while enhancing corporate development for provincial and industry gains. There simply feels as if there is no relationship and therefore little reconciliation (F. North Peigan, personal communication, January, 2013).

### **Colliding Worldviews & State Dependency**

James Sakej Youngblood Henderson (2000) describes colonization as an “ultra-theory” that promotes an artificial society by European thinkers who rejected the Crown’s vision of treaty commonwealth in international law. Today the honour of the Crown

relationship through treaties between Canada and its Indigenous peoples has been largely neglected and this is a barrier to healing. With colonialism, European beliefs, interests, and practices were enforced and used to justify the expansion of Europeans into Indigenous territories and livelihoods by any means necessary (Youngblood Henderson, 2000).

Youngblood Henderson further describes colonization as the “anti-trickster” in native culture. The “trickster” models Indigenous thought and behaviour in a world of flux from which stem resilient behaviours and meaningful adaptation. The anti-trickster forced artificial Eurocentric cognition and forced behaviours (Youngblood Henderson, 2000). This anti-trickster embodies spiritual guardians that were often devious and underhanded. Embodied as missionaries, the anti-trickster came to Indian Country to “save” the Indians from their archaic pagan ways. By offering salvation, these “spiritual guardians” colonized Indigenous peoples through tools such as the residential schools and the educational system (Youngblood Henderson, 2000).

Carol Murray (C. Murray, personal communication, February, 2012) describes this as “spiritual trauma,” where one is disconnected from prayer. She recalled that when she first began to pray, the constructs of Christianity—the son, the father, and the holy-ghost—were foreign to her and to the Blackfoot people. Murray described how she could not relate to these things but she could relate to praying to the Sun, Moon, and Morning Star, which she did daily.

Presently, this anti-trickster comes in many creative forms such as oppressive federal policies that limit capacity and infrastructures within tribal leadership and programming. Modern psychology is also an arm of this anti-trickster because it is based

on the foreign construct of individuality that opposes the Indigenous focus on collective experience (Youngblood Henderson, 2000). These historical and current intrusions by the federal government, and their oppressive policies and agendas, have limited growth, expansion, and independence of First Nation communities.

Alfred (2009) refers to state-dependent behaviours as inhibitors to reconstructing healthy and organic Indigenous identity. Helin (2006) describes this phenomenon of state dependency as “active promotion of dependency.” The federal government has actively promoted the reform of Indigenous identity since Indian and Northern Affairs Canada began governing and administering departmental policies. Their aim was to “transform” Indigenous people into “Canadians” while leaving their Indigenous ties and cultural identities behind. Such policies affected the efforts of Indigenous people to revitalize their cultures on their own terms.

Contemporary Indigenous communities are still reeling from the effects of this policy of “active promotion of dependency.” For example, many Indigenous people living in Canada live on income support, also known as welfare dependency. These families and individuals are often multi-generational dependents on this system (Helin, 2006). Andrew Blackwater (personal communication, March, 2012) discusses how poverty presents its own unique challenges to any race of people. He discusses Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs as a framework of understanding. Blackwater states that when you are impoverished and stressed (the foundation of the hierarchy), personal and individual health needs (higher level of the hierarchy) are not a priority. When the individual’s own health and well-being remain low priorities in their life, culture, and political resurgence are likely to remain even lower priorities.

Familiar with the day-to-day struggles of poverty, Blackwater encounters homeless people daily. He believes that these individuals are victims of the residential schools and the justice system. Blackwater expands on how individuals turn to crime and addictions to cope with their harsh realities having no other healthy coping skills. These individuals spiral into the justice system, beginning with fines they cannot pay, only to pay with their lives as they begin to be institutionalized. Institutionalization often begins in foster care and proceeds to imprisonment thereafter. The Canadian child welfare systems have 50% of Indigenous children as its caseload (Woods & Kirkey, 2013), whereas Indigenous inmates have the highest rates of incarceration in comparison to the average Canadian society (Helin, 2006; Ross, 1992). Aboriginal children are most vulnerable as they move from one government department to the next. Unfortunately, many have given up on a meaningful life and have given up hope, Blackwater (personal communication, March, 2012) states, and they simply exist on day-to-day basis.

While Blackwater sees a connection between the behaviours of mere existence and institutionalization processes in Canada, he also sees poverty as a matter of choice unless one is handicapped or incapable. Otherwise, he believes there are opportunities available for those who wish to work themselves out of poverty. The opportunities, Blackwater says, begin with a support system based within the Blackfoot culture, one that can support individuals with their recovery efforts.

Tribal leadership is left to navigate their unique role to cope with these impacts of colonization. Leadership must also find meaningful opportunities for their communities within the larger, but foreign, value system. With impoverished budgets and infrastructures, leadership is dependent on funding transfers from the federal government.

This funding process is based upon an archaic system of annual assessment designed to oppress and continue dependency (A. Blackwater, personal communication, March, 2012; Helin, 2006; A. Pard, personal communication, October, 2011).

No First Nation in Canada is funding their community independently, states Byron Jackson (B. Jackson, personal communication, August, 2013), the CEO for the *Piikani* Nation, who works directly with Aboriginal and Northern Development Canada (AANDC), the federal ministry which provides overall funding for every First Nation in Canada. This economic dependency reinforces a complex dependency that increases the social and political pathologies. Leadership is expected to improve the day-to-day lives of individuals. This expectation drains the resources of the leadership making them unable to deal with the larger political issues. The lack of resources to deal with the larger issues ensures further dependency because leadership is rendered unable to deal with the root problems.

With this said, Indigenous people have unconsciously adopted state dependency (Alfred, 2009) alongside community-mass dependency where leadership is seen as responsible for day-to-day existence (Helin, 2006). This reality has percolated through several generations of Indigenous psyches (Helin, 2006). Internalized dependency, co-dependency in relationships, limited literacy skills, depression, anxiety, and addiction have become normal and inhibit individuals from achieving self-autonomy and personal empowerment.

This internalization makes it difficult to treat the “individual” within a clinical setting as these systemic origins and reality influence all aspects of their day-to-day lives. Learned helplessness cycles throughout the psyches of Indigenous communities, families,

individuals, and leadership creating a trap. The evidence for this cycle lies within the following statistics presented by C. Helin (2006, pp. 112–113):

- On-reserve welfare is 5 times higher than non-Aboriginal people, and twice as high as off-reserve Aboriginal people.
- Male treaty Indians are 25 times more likely to be incarcerated provincially than non-native.
- Female treaty Indians are 131 times as likely to be incarcerated provincially than non-Indian females.
- Aboriginals account for 18 percent of Canadian prisoners and up to sixty percent in the prairies.

Most crimes are based out of survival, poverty, and addiction. The court stated “this reality is so stark and appalling that the magnitude of the problem can be neither understood or misinterpreted away.” (Helin, 2006, p. 113)

### **Current Mental Health & Clinical Issues**

Current interventions that explore religious and spiritual processes to improve well-being are scrutinized with western modes of investigation. “Biologization” is a form of reductionism, where spirituality is studied at a distance, from a neurological and biochemical perspective (Sperry, 2010). The perspectives originate with Descartes mind/body dichotomy, which further separates the mind from the brain (Sperry, 2010). Capra (1983/1988) describes this dichotomy as originating out of the Judeo-Christian religion that promoted their worldview as supreme reasoning and source of ultimate power and knowledge. Science with its linear rational thought replaced “God” as the ultimate authority. This was a time of advanced technology and economic growth one where spiritual ethos was removed, thus began the separation of church from state. A

scientific movement based in prediction and control begun to dichotomize the mind from body (Capra, 1983/1988). This removal of spirituality from all aspects of life is in stark contrast to a holistic Indigenous model of well-being.

The field of psychology originated from a white Euro-American, middle class, male perspective where new psychological knowledge was forced to endure the rigors of objectivity, reduction, and validity (Duran & Duran, 1995). Duran and Duran (1995) criticize academia as lactifying or whitening new knowledge to be palatable to academia (Alfred, 2009; Duran & Duran, 1995). Lactification removes those aspects of new knowledge sought for cross-cultural delivery of services for Indigenous people and ethnic minorities infused with “spirituality and culture” (Duran & Duran, 1995; McCabe, 2007). Although some fields of psychology now explore spirituality in relation to well-being, this research undergoes “psychologization” a process of reducing ideas to psychological constructs (Sperry, 2010).

McCabe (2007) states that Indigenous people see counsellors as “agents of social control” that deliver therapy that carries out agendas of assimilation. This perspective results in Indigenous clients becoming suspicious of treatment and therefore they tend not to seek or receive it (Warner, 2003). Alarming high numbers of Indigenous people would rather go to an emergency room, a physician or an elder or community member than go to a counsellor according to Faye Isbister-North Peigan, a nurse and Director of Health for the *Piikani* Nation (F. Isbister-North Peigan, personal communication, March, 2013).

Alongside the political and assimilationist agendas of the national governments, recovery efforts are obstructed by the lack of culturally appropriate interventions. Clinical



and para-professional approaches to mental health programming efforts can both be harmful unintentionally (F. Isbister-North Peigan, personal communication, March, 2013). Blackwater (personal communication, March, 2012) states that learning as Blackfoot people is done through emotional imprinting. Therefore, the learning is complicated by the emotional ramifications of colonization.

Understanding the impacts of these historical conditions may enhance practitioners' understanding of Indigenous clients, and it should provide better outcomes for the Indigenous client (Chansonneuve, 2007; McCabe, 2007). By gaining awareness about special populations, a practitioner may increase their empathy for Indigenous clients, and improve their skill for interventions (Corey, 2001; Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 2007; McCabe, 2007). Ethically, clinicians must have competency in meeting the needs of their specific client populations. Without this competency, which may be gained through specific cultural education, clinical practice can harm the client (Corey, 2001; McBride, 2013). Psychologists' and counsellors' awareness of these matters enhance the service they provide to the Indigenous client and their families, helping clients come to understand how their realities are shaped by their lived colonial experience (Alfred, 2005; Chansonneuve, 2007; Corey, 2001; Corey et al., 2007).

Where clinical therapy falters, Indigenous mental health programming and para-professionals attempt to address the significant psychological aftermath for their client and their communities. These attempts often fall short due to inadequate training to address the complicated behaviours, arising from colonization, and may again be harmful to the client (F. Isbister-North Peigan, personal communication, March, 2013).

The following areas of concern are overlooked within community-based Indigenous mental health programming: issues of confidentiality, secure client environments, dual relationships that are professional and personal of the practitioner in the community they serve, professional conduct, vulnerability of client and therapist relationships, lack of counsellor self awareness, vicarious trauma, as well as non-adherence to an ethical association and its guidelines (McBride, 2013). Trained and certified clinicians are governed by a professional association that adheres to provincial or national standards of ethical practice. Para-professionals, operating in Indigenous communities, most times have limited training in these issues and not accountable to a professional association with ethical guidelines. A degree or license alone does not guarantee competence (Corey et al., 2007), yet it does have worth equal to cultural proficiency. Harmony between the professional and cultural remains the goal. Limited training and cultural insensitivities in therapy with Indigenous clients occurs, and it can harm the clients, even if it is unintentional.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV (DSM IV) is criticized because of the loss of deep exploration of human and emotional experience (Sperry, 2010). Clinical practices arising from the DSMIV often include medicating clients with prescription drugs with the aim to restore baseline function and symptom reduction (Sperry, 2010). This practice has led to the excessive rates of the prescription drug abuse amongst First Nations people.

Current research standards, psychometric testing, and psychological assessment (Duran & Duran, 1995; Duran 2006) are destructive to Indigenous people and promote institutional racism (Alfred, 2005; Duran & Duran, 1995). Standardization of these tools

is a necessary process for approval. However, the standardization process is biased in favour of middle-class or Anglo society, often university and college students, and economic and social privilege. These tests jar minority groups falling outside “normal” behaviours and biased against, even racist, towards, people of colour (T. Gunn, personal communication, 2007).

These interventions and therapeutic models do not meet the needs of Indigenous people. The models expect Indigenous people to reconfigure their cultural values to conform to the individualistic value systems of the West (McCormick, 2009).

### **Post-Colonial Interventions & Historical Trauma**

The term *post-colonialism* is referred to as the aftermath of colonization (Duran & Duran, 1995; Youngblood Henderson, 2000). The contemporary era reflects the stage of recuperation and decolonization that is currently the priority for and by Indigenous people (Adelson, 2009; Alfred, 2005; Youngblood Henderson, 2000). Maladaptive functioning of Indigenous people are expressions of the correlation between the colonial past and present; paradoxically so are the interventions and solutions. Areas of historical interference include but are not limited to residential school systems, war and massacre, spiritual colonization and oppression, family fragmentation, land displacement, institutional racism, marginalization, and poverty (Alfred, 2005; Duran & Duran, 1995; Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 2003).

As paradigms shift in Indigenous communities, they reflect a movement away from oppressive, archaic, and foreign structures and a move toward Indigenous creation of health and healing (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2007).

Indigenous scholar and clinician, Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart (2003) calls this multilevel systemic issue, *Historical Trauma Transmission* (HTT). She explores how this process depicts emotional and psychological wounding that accumulates over a person's lifespan and across generations, culminating in a *group trauma experience*. Adelson (2009) suggests that as the trauma was accumulated intergenerationally, and within a broad socio-political context, then so must the solutions to this trauma be.

For Blackfoot people, more specifically the *Amskapi Piikani* people of Montana, the Baker Massacre has been a source of trauma. An unsuspecting group of Peigan people of the Blackfoot Confederacy were massacred. The United States government mistakenly attacked and murdered this group of unarmed women, children and elders while their men were hunting and gathering (Chambers & Blood, 2009). Carol Murray who works at the Blackfeet Community College, described an experience of HTT while educating Blackfeet students about the Bakers Massacre. She stated how trauma is founded in incidents where people are not conscious or even aware of its existence.

Students who visited the Baker massacre site were triggered negatively and began to weep. The students did not know why they felt immediate pain, but it was powerful and proximate to the massacre site. Through such historical traumas, Murray says, Indigenous confidence is lowered and damaged. These traumas were intense and overwhelming so the grief was never processed, but the grief was transmitted to the next generation.

Historical traumas such as residential school experience in Canada have only begun to be dealt with because of financial and legal ramifications for the governments if they were to admit culpability. Residential schools in Canada were implemented by

federal policy as a means to eradicate the “Indian problem” from an administrative and legislative perspective. Legislation was implemented where Indigenous children were forcefully taken from families and communities and became state property (Chambers & Blood, 2009) to be inculcated in the Eurocentric mode of education and religion. During this painful period for Indigenous people, the children and families were then at the mercy of the school and religious staff whom abused the children sexually, physically, psychologically, intellectually, spiritually, morally, and socially. Most recently in Canada, the federal government chose financial and legal pathways to reconcile with the students’ grievances, including a federal apology. While this process provides a tangible source of reconciliation on behalf of Canada, the continual re-traumatization alongside the relentless attacks legislatively upon Indigenous people, do not.

Like other forms of historical trauma, such as the Baker Massacre, Indigenous people are again unable to process and cope with the recall of such traumas. Instead, they are encouraged to rush through the process and to close the historical door on the government’s involvement. Many do not want to talk about it, but their families urge them to be compensated for their experience. Their often painful experiences are then quantified into a dollar amount, a financial recovery effort made within the same court system that has historically demeaned them. This process further complicates recovery efforts.

### **Internalized Oppression**

“Someone who does not see a pane of glass does not know that he does not see it” is the opening quote in Iris Marion Young’s (1990, p. 39) chapter on the faces of oppression. Young describes how institutional conditions, intentionally set, develop the

environment for collective injustices of oppression. These conditions keep Indigenous people internally disrupted and therefore unable to assimilate-or progress successfully and to achieve justice. Oppression is a central piece of political discourse and often relegated to discussions about brute political forces such as slavery, the Nazi terrors, or communism. However, the aftermath of oppression includes oppressed people suffering from the inability to express thoughts, needs, or feelings. Young's "five faces of oppression" include exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. She continues to state that oppression is to be considered a "condition" amongst such groups. These faces emerge not from tyranny, but rather from "everyday practices of a well intentioned liberal society" (Young, 1990, p. 41). Therefore, when one is looking out of their house constructed with liberal intention, one cannot see the window pane; they do not know it is there. In this way, everyday liberal practices—such as media, policies, and legislation—become conventional unquestioned norms and rules, resulting in institutional rules with consequences (Young, 1990). The systemic interruptions then immobilize Indigenous efforts to re-harmonize or reconcile their environments and the ceiling for healing is met before it can be authentically and justly implemented.

One of the most detrimental forms of post-colonial behaviours stemming out of oppression is "internalized oppression," the adoption of the colonizer's worldview itself. On an individual level, the adage of divide and conquer is an age-old practice that divides the group so they turn on one another. This presents conflict over resources, which benefit the individual as opposed to benefiting the collective (Duran & Duran, 1995).

Today the psychological war still rages within Indigenous communities; it is witnessed in the high levels of domestic violence as well as institutional and lateral violence. Each attacks the colonized archetype of the self, known as the “symbolic self,” in order to destroy the image of self they have learned to hate (Duran, 2006). Domestic and institutional violence are acts of externalized self-hatred and the interpersonal conflicts result in suicide and high alcohol and substance abuse (Duran & Duran, 1995). This violence is a result of deeply entrenched political, historical, and cultural attacks of colonization (Duran, 2006).

Murray describes this process of self-hate. She states that those who do well in the communities project their spiritual happiness or confidence. Others, who are not doing so well, in turn seek to “bring others down” by talking about, or acting out negatively toward them to remove their happiness or spiritual confidence. Murray states that this form of colonization has impacted people’s freedom to express their feelings and fundamental spiritual happiness, to such an extent that it is now seen as negative to express one’s happiness.

Murray stresses how *cultural or spiritual colonization* is a reality and can be seen in the abuse of *transferred allocations*<sup>4</sup> amongst the Blackfoot. The survival of Blackfoot ceremony is so fragile already, in respect to Blackfoot Orthodox<sup>5</sup> culture, illustrated in the limited number of people who participate within this culture. Furthering the fragility, Murray states, are oppressive behaviours in ceremony. An example is when someone

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<sup>4</sup> Transferred allocations is a process of transferring spiritual knowledge in Blackfoot custom, in which there is a gradual adoption of these “rites” by the individual over a lifetime. An expansion of this concept is in the methodology section.

<sup>5</sup> Blackfoot Orthodox Culture refers to the true culture that was granted to the Blackfoot people spiritually and without interruption of its truest form and essence.

with transferred rites abuses their authority, in order to gain personally. Such oppression is unacceptable and must be dealt with by those with authority to do so in that cultural context, that is the spiritual leaders.

Murray identifies residential schools as the core experience that caused Indigenous people to disconnect from their feelings and to be unable to cope with traumas or survive the experiences. Ideally, Blackfoot ceremonies are to be places without negativity in thought, discussion, or actions; however, the impacts of colonialism on the ceremonies can negate the healing that is to occur. This contradiction occurs when people involved in the ceremonies and spiritual leaders, due to maladaptive behaviours and personal agendas, are self-serving and do not put integrity first.

Western social service institutions, such as foster care and jails, can be excessively inhumane. The dire need for significant interventions into these systems falls to this generation and society whether that is acknowledged or denied. The efforts of those participating in the Indigenous traditional cultures increases each year and this is significant enough to pay attention to (F. Weasel Head, personal communication, September 18, 2013). Elders are seeking apprentices into the traditional culture, as the learning can only occur there. Murray describes this as the loss of “spiritual confidence” and she believes that the goal of decolonization is to restore the spiritual confidence of individuals, families, and communities. The next chapter will discuss the decolonization efforts and its relevance to the developing spiritual framework of this thesis.



### Chapter 3: *Aa pata potok kimaan*, Decolonization

#### Indigenous Renaissance & Decolonization

“It is time for our people to live again” (Alfred, 2005, p. 19) is Alfred’s opening statement for his litigious but empowering book, *Wasáse*. Alfred’s message empowers Indigenous people to live and thrive, rather than merely survive. Advancing this notion, Alfred states that to break free of colonial chains is to reclaim Indigenous languages, spirituality, norms, identity, and overall culture (Alfred, 2005). Resurgence against colonial forces will transform society by recreating Indigenous existence and identity through Indigenous culture. Not only will Indigenous societies be transformed positively, but also their place within the larger Canadian society (RCAP, 1996).

In Blackfoot, *Aa pata potok kiinan* refers to the process of Creator’s will. Tom Crane Bear (T. Crane Bear, personal communication, February, 2010), a *Siksika* elder stated in a discussion between him and I, that concept of surrender and acceptance of a force greater than human beings, a Creator with a destiny set out for everyone. The destiny is always positive, even if the journey may present challenges. When there are challenges and when one does not know their path, their job is to pray for assistance in altering the path that does not look good (A. Pard, personal communication, October, 2011).

Decolonization is recovery, and it is achieved by demanding acknowledgement of Indigenous existence and support for the revitalization of culture through connections to the land and cultural engagement (Alfred, 2005). This challenges Indigenous people to participate actively and intentionally, in their decolonization rather than to be complacent, submissive, and dependent recipients of “help.”

Adelson (2009) describes this recuperation as “taking back” the cultural means to build community health by focusing on reawakening Indigenous spirituality. Adelson (2009) says this recuperation is highly complex and must be mediated by Indigenous cultural, social, and political influences. Alfred (2005, 2009) states such recovery must be grounded in a spiritual revolution within the socio-political efforts that reflect Indigenous values and ethos for re-harmonization.

Laenui (2000) warns those decolonizing to ensure they do not simply change positions with the colonizer. Alfred (2005) calls this process “Aboriginalism” which signifies the name—Aboriginal—the government imposed on Indigenous people, which then takes on the characteristics and agendas imposed by the state. True decolonization requires the complete reevaluation of the socio-political, economical, and judicial systems (Laenui, 2000) to ensure these systems embrace traditional Indigenous values and culture. Recuperation remains a challenge as assimilation has deteriorated Indigenous identities and spiritual connections (Cajete, 2000).

Carol Murray asks, “What is the collective agreement that we are striving for?” Murray states that due to their colonial demise many Blackfoot and other Indigenous people cannot see the potential of decolonization; she believes it is the duty of Indigenous people to become knowledgeable about themselves, their cultures, mainstream culture and so forth. As Indigenous people become more knowledgeable, they will also become aware of the aides and tools for change and that decolonization resides within their specific Indigenous culture. Murray is adamant that to remain in such maladaptive colonial states of being is simply “killing us”; there is no other way to express it.

The colonization that Blackfoot and Indigenous people endure simply cannot go on (C. Murray, personal communication, February, 2012). As world history on colonization demonstrates the predictable outcome of decolonization is that the colonized become the colonizer. Murray states that no Blackfoot would feel good about this, and that while there is much to be done to decolonize, Indigenous people are simultaneously trying to find their liberation and freedom and without colonizers in the process.

Murray believes that “self development” is holistic in nature, and is not restricted to the physical, emotional, and spiritual realms, but includes the intellectual development. She described how Freire’s book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, transformed her staff, herself, and Indigenous people globally. The book makes the case that colonization is strongest when the Indigenous people are kept illiterate. Murray sees this truth everyday in her community; for example, high school students are becoming free speakers and thinkers while breaking free of the chains of oppression and imprisonment.

Just as oppression works to take Indigenous prayer away, so too does it take love away (C. Murray, personal communication, February, 2012). People feel loss of love of the self and therefore loss of love for and from others that results in feelings of insufficiency and fear. Traditionally, fear was never a hindrance to the Blackfoot as they customarily had to gain resources to advance the tribe, even if this meant death. Today fear is present and changing the entire face of the Blackfoot. Murray concludes that the smudge, an Indigenous practice of lighting incense as a part of a prayer, and the prayer is equivalent to unconditional love, and brings back the love that oppression seeks to take away.

Laenui (2000) describes a pro-active approach to the final stages of decolonization, one that is based on consensus. This path works to incorporate technological advances and contemporary developments that benefit and align with Indigenous philosophies and belief systems. This path is in contrast to the protests and violence Indigenous people may have used in the past to attain independence (Alfred, 2005; Laenui, 2000). In progressing to the ultimate stages of decolonization, Indigenous people must accept evolution within cultures that reflect a harmony between Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) and contemporary knowledge. The synthesis of ITK with western contemporary psychology is increasingly occurring. This thesis, for example, places spiritual renewal and participation at the core of psychological decolonization (Alfred, 2005; Battiste, 2000; Duran, 2006).

Psychologists and counsellors must understand that ITK provides meaningful therapeutics for Indigenous clients. There is no definitive answer to the question, “What is traditional knowledge?” Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000) state because ITK is not uniform across Indigenous groups. ITK is as much a component of a clan or community as it is the individual. It is understood as dependent on the beliefs and practices of the group that conceptualizes them (Battiste, 2000).

In a longitudinal study on First Nation’s health, Dumont (2005) describes “Indigenous intelligence” as a conscious embodiment of exemplary knowledge used in beneficial and useful ways. Intelligence, in this perspective, comes from all aspects of knowledge—the mind, body, and spirit—and the people’s capacity is not reached without intelligence of the heart. Through living close with nature, Indigenous people gained significant insight into their world including human beings, animals, the land, and the

cosmological universe. Harmony among these relationships helped Indigenous people to reach their optimal levels of functioning (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; Wilson, 2008).

The title of this thesis refers to “embodiment” which is the harmonization. Simultaneously, with colonization—which was active, real, and impactful—I TK was passed on intergenerationally through prayer and consciously teaching cultural values. Each generation developed new constructs and technological insights that embrace Indigenous values for Indigenous advancement (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000).

Dr. Erica-Irene Daes of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations concluded that the best practice is to allow Indigenous people to define I TK themselves as it pertains to their own specific environment and culture (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000). Daes concluded that I TK can only be fully learned and comprehended through apprenticeship, ceremony, and practice within Indigenous communities. The land and environment are central classrooms and deep conversations daily with elders are the teachers (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; A. Blackwater, personal communication, March, 2012).

Pard (personal communication, October, 2011) states that when our people can come to grips with their “Indianness” they can return home to their own ways. This homecoming works to fill the void of walking empty in the western world. He describes this with the analogy of “coming home to one’s mother,” and receiving her warm loving welcome. Pard describes how the lack of love and compassion in the western world is not

what Indigenous people are accustomed to. By returning to cultural teachings, Indigenous people receive and practice the love and acceptance necessary for healing and recovery.

In conclusion, decolonization places Indigenous values, practices, and participation at the core. Decolonization, though difficult, will reap benefits for the colonized Indigenous person seeking relief from, and ways to cope with, the hybrid maladaptive behaviours that have been accumulated within their lifetime and intergenerationally. This chapter establishes a framework for decolonization to be the foundation of Indigenous well-being. The following section describes the research design for this study. It describes the methodology for gathering knowledge from an Indigenous perspective, and seeks to compliment that which current western academic acknowledge.

#### **Chapter 4: *Tsanii Kinispa*, Methodology**

##### **Methodology: Indigenous Research**

The Indigenous research experience includes the Indigenous worldview; a world perceived through the cultivation of relationships between the natural and human world. These worlds include the cosmological, epistemological, and cultural (Wilson, 2008). L. Little Bear (personal communication, May, 2013) states that *tsanii kinispa* ask “How do you know?” The Blackfoot interpretation of methodology is about validating what you claim to be true.

Shawn Wilson (2008), an Indigenous author of *Research is Ceremony*, describes the dominant research paradigm as problematic for Indigenous people and communities. The problem is that western research perpetuates “illness” and leaves limited room for research outside of this paradigm. By way of contrast, Indigenous approaches to research

aim to promote “wellness.” The focus of this thesis is on wellness, as will be explored through the data gained through four Elder interviews, from a Blackfoot worldview (see Appendices A–D).

In Indigenous worldview, individuals do not own ideas, values, or insights, and Indigenous approaches to research reflect this. Indigenous research reflects an Indigenous interpretation of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (Wilson, 2008) while research done in the dominant paradigm of Western research “amputates” the human experience from the researcher:

Emotionless, passionless, abstract, intellectual research is a goddam lie, it does not exist. It is a lie to ourselves and a lie to other people. Humans, feeling, living, breathing, thinking humans, do research. When we try to cut ourselves off at the neck and pretend an objectivity that does not exist in the human world, we become dangerous, to ourselves first, and then to the people around us. (Wilson, 2008, p. 56)

This “amputation” process removes gender, culture, sexuality, language, and spirit, all of which are fundamental to Indigenous research. While western academic research is reputable, and to be respected for its findings and for the transmission of the results to society, there is a danger when this dominant mode of research prohibits Indigenous cultural ways of knowing and doing. These include the lived experience of Indigenous people such as the researcher.

Indigenous research is a journey where the researcher connects with those involved in the research with mutual respect and responsibility. These connections are often based on previously established relationships. The protocols of mutual respect and responsibility strengthen relationships and give them a

sacred foundation. Wilson (2008) states, that if research does not change the researcher then it is not research.

### **Indigenous Research Paradigm**

Understanding the cultural perspective and context of the research is significant for the thesis. From an Indigenous perspective, the transmission of knowledge—including traditional storytelling and sharing a personal testimony of what is and how things came to be through various sources—is deemed a sacred process (Bastien, 2004). This is what Wilson refers to as “relational accountability.” Relational accountability promotes respect, responsibility, and reciprocity for the researcher and participants (Wilson, 2008). Within this Indigenous paradigm, *participant* is a broad category inclusive of people, literature, testimony, and universal living beings (Wilson, 2008; L. Little Bear, personal communication, March 27, 2010).

The researcher works to attain accountability in the relationships he or she is involved with, inclusive of spiritual relationships. This accountability is accomplished through cultural and spiritual protocols that the researcher must know and adhere to throughout the research process. *Responsibility* is primary as it enacts the highest level of regard for the participants. The researcher’s focus is local to the community where the Indigenous researcher or team has built *respectful* and personal relationships in the past (Wilson, 2008). This is similar to the application of rules for ethical conduct by the professional associations that govern registered psychologists (Sinclair & Pettifor, 2001). These associations are



to uphold ethical parameters that serve to protect the client or research participants, including their intellectual property (Sinclair & Pettifor, 2001).

If the researcher understands the needs of the community through already established relationships, the researcher is more likely to benefit the community, demonstrating the significance of *reciprocity* for the Indigenous research. This non-obtrusive process also ensures there will be less intimidation, resentment, and exclusion from the research and better outcomes (Wilson, 2008).

Transmission of knowledge is thus organic. As relationship to others is *respectful*, so must be the relationship the researcher has with him or herself. In the Indigenous methodology, the researcher is called to be aware of the proper ways of relating and acting, recognized as protocols (Wilson, 2008). These protocols are a necessary part of the methodology for attaining knowledge about and within cultural realms as well for keeping the participants in the research safe from any harm.

This study aimed to be Indigenously developed and planned and for the Indigenous culture to be the foundation of the research. Therefore, as “research is ceremony,” the Indigenous “research ceremony” commences and with that ethics, protocols, and relationships are engaged. The preparation phase in this ceremony is as significant as the process, actualizations, and reflection that follow.

## **Sources**

In general, methodology addresses two questions: How were the data collected? How were the data analyzed? Answers to these questions provide accountability for how the research was conducted, provide assurance about the

validity. Indigenous methodologies embody relationships based within the Indigenous value systems (First Rider, 1994). The researcher and participant exercise these values. The values reflect further credibility in the already established relationship and therefore credible findings and sources.

Within an Indigenous methodology, the researcher draws upon two knowledge sources. These include a) *other human beings* from literature, media, testimonies, and so forth; and b) *universal knowledge*, which embraces the natural world, and all that belongs to it, including its spiritual properties (L. Little Bear, personal communication, March 27, 2010).

In this case, the primary source of data gathering was interviews: four Blackfoot people whom hold the authority speak on the issues in respect to the Blackfoot sacred worldview and practices. These individuals hold the rites to engage in Blackfoot spiritual practices from the highest forms. Such spiritual “grandparents” have held a Blackfoot sacred bundle in the course of their life and are still connected to that bundle in some form or another.

### **Qualifiers**

From a Blackfoot and Indigenous perspective, the only “sure” source of information is one’s own experiences. For example, the interview participants often reminded the interviewer that they could only speak from a Blackfoot experience. They could not speak to something for the sake of answering a question. This is part of their responsibility to uphold the integrity of Blackfoot spiritual knowledge. Indigenous methodology has qualifiers to substantiate the rest (L. Little Bear, personal communication, March 27, 2010).

The two qualifiers are *relational-network standpoint* and *value-system perspective* (L. Little Bear, personal communication, March 27, 2010). A *relational-network standpoint* qualifier is where one judges or assesses the *truth value* of incoming information, based on the relational affiliation between listener and speaker. A judgment depends on how close this source is affiliated to the researcher. As previously mentioned, if the participant is not that familiar with a concept, they will then suggest to the researcher where to seek it from someone in their close relational network who may be more knowledgeable.

The *value-system perspective* qualifier is when received information from a source is parallel to the value system. In the traditional value system to assess the truth value of a statement, the researcher will weigh what the person is saying against their reputation as the individual (First Rider, 1994). Overall, the Indigenous culture provides interpretive research guidelines. These interpretations also can be enhanced through the natural world. For example, when one understands the importance of the eagle showing itself, that sighting can be interpreted as a “blessing” and therefore enhance the accuracy for the research at that particular time (L. Little Bear, personal communication, March 27, 2010).

### **Ontology**

Ontology asks, “What is real?” This is a question to which there is no definitive answer (Wilson, 2008). From the Indigenous perspective, “What is real?” is subjective and localized within a culture, where the reality is manifested as the sum of all relationships, with the self, others, and the universe (Wilson, 2008). From a Blackfoot perspective, Little Bear explores the nature of reality,

and how an Indigenous ontology is manifested and understood (personal communication, March 27, 2010). Blackfoot or Indigenous knowledge is located in the following sources of knowledge: language, relational networks, ceremony, songs, stories, dreams, elders, and personal experience (L. Little Bear, personal communication, March 27, 2010). Through each of these features, a reality is constructed of how things are done and why.

Within the Blackfoot ceremonial system, there is a process of transferring authority of knowledge and authority to practice that knowledge, referred to as *poomahksin*, “the transferring of authority” (A. Pard, personal communication, June, 2013). To attain the highest levels of authority in this system, one accumulates knowledge through active and continual participation in the Blackfoot knowledge systems. These transfers, over time, provide one with the ability to utilize their belief system, their ontology, to determine “What is real?”.

As the nature of existence is about “being” from an ontological perspective, an Indigenous paradigm states that “energy waves” are foundational to existence, and influence existence spiritually. Little Bear uses the analogy of radio waves to demonstrate how energy “knows.” As waves flow through objects, so do the waves or energy flow through human beings to then create a reaction or an effect. This fluctuating experience is significant in the understanding of Indigenous reality. Everything exists in relation to something else and everything will be affected by something else.

In their descriptions of their experiences with prayer and ceremony, interview participants consistently validated this energy context. They believe that

being able to shift energies through prayer and ceremony was primary to the continued survival as Indigenous people. This is far greater than simple resiliency, but rather a way for an Indigenous person to actively alter or change factors and forces in that person's life specifically.

### **Axiology**

Axiology asks, "What is worth searching for?" This reflects the depth of the relationship that the researcher has with the community in which the research is taking place. This process was significant to the research as participants were more available through their close proximity to the researcher. Whether it was through informal or formal encounters with the research topic, the proximity enhanced the research.

Axiology also asks, "What is ethical to do to gain this knowledge, and what will this knowledge be used for?" Wilson (2008) understands this to be relational accountability. Relationships with the self, others, and the universe are central to being Indigenous (L. Little Bear, personal communication, March 27, 2010; Wilson, 2008). Relational accountability in research is when the choice of topic, methods of data collection and analysis, and presentation of data are from this Indigenous relational perspective.

Indigenous Axiology stipulates that relationships among the self, others, and universe are fundamental to research and knowing. This gives rise to cultural protocols for maintaining respectful, safe, and rich relationships (Wilson, 2008). Offering gifts to the participants was following protocol by signifying my respect for the engagement. I offered my time and resources to participants to

demonstrate my long-term and committed relationship to them, as well as to the spiritual journey I was on. I offered “camp and prayer goods” which includes such things as sweet grass, cloth, and sage. I also offered my time and energy to work at any of their encampments, whether it was at a bundle ceremony or the annual sun dance gathering. The participants warmly received these offerings; it was deemed appropriate, that the researcher had followed the proper protocols.

These interpersonal protocols encompass principles of self-care, personal respect, and ethical judgment in one’s own life, and exemplify a person’s responsibility to obtain and uphold these virtues not only for others but also for one’s self. Respect, reciprocity, and responsibility are the three guiding principles of relational accountability that the researcher must attain and obtain (Wilson, 2008). As the researcher, I had to demonstrate that I was capable of receiving and respecting this valuable knowledge. The further the relationships between I and the participants developed, whether it was inside or out of the research itself, the more intimate the discussions became. The participants provided me with encouragement each time we made contact. The participants urged me on, and assured me that the thesis was important and something to overcome the difficult position the masses of Indigenous people lived today was needed. This motivated each of us to greater instances of disclosure, to seek increased connections. The participants stated that the practicality of the research was of the highest importance. They said that the research needed to directly benefit the people researched, the communities of the participants.

## **Epistemology**

Epistemology is the study of the nature of thinking or knowing (Wilson, 2008). Epistemology asks, “How do I know what is real?” A paradigm contains a people’s underlying beliefs that guide actions (First Rider, 1994), therefore the basis for cultural processes of Indigenous relationships, the relationships within the self, others, and the universe (L. Little Bear, personal communication, March 27, 2010). That is the process of how an Indigenous paradigm is developed and upheld. Little Bear (personal communication, March 27, 2010) states that knowledge is manifested through the culmination and engagement between everyday experience(s), language, song, ceremony, and relationships with all beings.

The participants gave examples of this cumulative knowledge as they described their personal involvement in the Blackfoot culture and how this shaped their identities. This included their roles in carrying the pipes and bundles with whom they are affiliated with, which will be explored shortly.

## **Methodology**

Methodology asks, “How do I gather this knowledge?” and “How do I know what I have gathered is true?” In the Indigenous research process, validation is a combination of the relationships formed and the manner in which one acts within those relationships. For example, in the Indigenous research paradigm, a researcher is obligated to secure sources of information and that would be by establishing relationships with those known in the community as knowledge holders.

In the Blackfoot world those with knowledge, hold or held bundles. In the customary traditions, the knowledge holders were identified by their reputable efforts and longevity. A bundle holder historically was mentored in the age-graded, sacred societies of the Blackfoot (Hungry Wolf, 1980). Each society has distinct songs, dances, and responsibilities to maintain spiritual order in the tribe. Such a spiritual apprenticeship would have to exemplify the cumulative collective values and then a man and his wife/woman could acquire a bundle (Hungry Wolf, 1980). This process continues today. The participants were chosen for this study because they have endured. These spiritual leaders are the primary sources of Blackfoot knowledge. Through my active involvement within the Blackfoot communities, I was able to identify these knowledgeable participants.

Repetition is a component of methodology, and there is an equivalent in Indigenous research and knowledge systems. In this study repetition occurred through the overlapping of stories and citation of the participant's sources of authority in each and every interview. The sacred creation stories and traditional knowledge of each participant was similar if not identical to the next.

**Thesis Methodology.** The people of the Blackfoot believed that through replication, renewal, and carrying out the directives of the spiritual beings, they would secure their existence as well as their well-being (Ewers, 1988; L. Little Bear, personal communication, 2001). In *The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains*, Ewers (1988) documents the ceremonial endeavours and practices that continuously took place in the era before mass cultural genocide occurred in Blackfoot Country. Although written



in a Eurocentric discourse that represents a view external to Indigenous understanding, it does document the routine, spiritual practices of Blackfoot people in that era

Although some change has occurred in the materials and carrying out of religious practices, the application, virtues, language, and meaning has remained the same for Blackfoot people. In each respective tribe, there is a declaration of the Blackfoot way of life specific to that particular tribe. For example, for the *Piikani* people, the declaration is titled *Piikaniisinnii*. This declaration shapes the mission and vision statements for the leadership and documents the historic origins of how this tribe came to be and its functioning thereafter. *Piikaniisinnii* describes the way the *Piikani*/ Blackfoot people governed themselves, where they lived, what were their traditions and what they believed in. This declaration serves to provide guidance on the values, culture, language, and worldview of the *Piikani* people (A. Pard, personal communication, June, 2013).

This declaration, and others like it, also include the articulation of *poomahksin*, which specifies transfers of sacred knowledge by means of sacred protocols. Including *poomahksin* speaks to the ethics of such declarations. *Poomahksin* is significant in this discussion because it is the way that knowledge is solidified and validated in Blackfoot society. *Poomahksin* refers to a transfer of power or authority (A. Pard, personal communication, October, 2011). These transfers signify to the Blackfoot those people who have the authority or right to carry out certain ceremonies, sing certain songs, and even tell certain stories; for example. *Poomahksin* ensures that sacred knowledge is protected and safeguarded, rather than free flowing. These safeguards do not merely keep the culture alive and relevant, but they ensure that it never changes. Only the individuals who are given these ceremonial rites or *poomahksin*, can conduct the ceremonies

specifically the way they were originally handed down to the Blackfoot people in the beginning of existence.

This can be considered Orthodox Blackfoot. Therefore, these transferred rites holders are the Orthodox Blackfoot knowledge holders. Blackwater (personal communication, March 2012) states that when enacting an actual transfer where an individual will be receiving “rites,” there must be acknowledgement of those from whom the rites were attained. The individual with the newly transferred rites will always acknowledge from whom he or she received their transfers. This process of acknowledgement reinforces the validity of the source. Witnessing the original transfers and professing that witnessing to the Blackfoot world is another form of authority. A person can utilize their personal experience and education alongside their *poomahksin* to validate their words and actions. This process ensures that Blackfoot knowledge remains valid.

Today many “instant Indians,” Pard says, want to mock Blackfoot spirituality without *poomahksin*, without the aforementioned practices of cultural accountability. Although the rules are unwritten, Pard explains, *poomahksin* ensures ethical behaviour in governing and administrating the culture and thus ensures the healing it sacredly embraces (personal communication, October, 2011).

The methodology of this study was designed to be in line with its content and with ethics derived from the aforementioned Blackfoot practices. To legitimate exploration of Blackfoot prayer and its healing properties, “Blackfoot sacred societal members” validated the legitimacy of the study outcomes. Thus, the constructs of well-being for Indigenous people within this study are seen through a Blackfoot lens. To

explore spiritual and sacred knowledge, the study explored prayers from these legitimate Blackfoot sources. These discussions demonstrated the meaning of prayers, including “instructions for life,” and psychological wellness.

This will serve to exemplify methods, practices or ways of understanding that can serve to bridge generational and language gaps for those removed from these populations, such as urban Indigenous people, youth or even those alienated from their own communities due to residual experiences of the residential schools. Colonialism displaced many spiritual practices that were once abundant practices that maintained wellness, and a healthy psychological makeup for Indigenous people. This exploration of prayer hopes to restore some of these understandings.

This study proposed to discuss how thought and action must be renewed through restorative processes of culture and spirituality (Alfred, 2005). This has been the message of Indigenous leaders, academics, grass-root populations, and communities. They believe that prayer provides a “life map” for people recovering from devastating effects of cultural genocide. The term “grass-root” refers to the people that live in the “hub” of the community and its functions (D. Crow Shoe, personal communication, April 29, 2014). The process of thesis involved (a) identifying these ingredients for life, and then (b) identifying a framework from a Blackfoot sacred perspective for those willing to explore cultural and spiritual resources, and (c) employing the Indigenous Paradigm to analyze the findings.

**Limitations.** The thesis was written from the perspective of the exploration of Blackfoot prayer as a foundational base for clinically counseling Blackfoot clients. Though there are a large number of similarities with other Aboriginal cultures such as

Cree, the author makes no assumptions that “Blackfoot prayer as a foundational base for clinical counseling” is applicable to other Aboriginal cultures. This study is not a comparative study of Aboriginal cultures, nor a comparative study with Western clinical approaches and practices. Lastly, this study makes no claims about the success factor of “Blackfoot prayer as a foundational base for clinical counseling” due to the multiplicity of factors that differentiate individuals. The research is not based within a traditional psychological research fashion, but rather in a spiritual approach. The researcher is not from within a sacred society of any Blackfoot societies and this limits her capacity to interpret certain aspects of the participants’ comments. There was no representation from the *Siksika* Nation as originally planned, due to the inability to participate from that particular identified participant. The author would like to notify the reader to keep these factors in mind when reading this thesis. This study is an exploration for an alternative foundational base for clinical counseling of Blackfoot clients.

### **Participants**

As the foundation of the thesis is spiritual in nature, I was considered a participant, alongside the other participants, and thus I had to prepare spiritually for the study. The nature of the study evolved alongside my professional, academic, and personal actualizations. Therefore, the cleansing spiritually of “debris” that could influence this study negatively was taken care of. This custom will be elaborated on further in the thesis. I understood that I was privileged to participate in this study, and that I was obligated to treat it with respect. Therefore, my entry into the “ceremony” of research commenced, with an offering to seek blessing and protection for all involved, as well as

for the greater good of humanity. Wilson (2008) challenges the researcher that if their research does not change them, then it is not research.

Through my relational network as a Blackfoot person, traditional knowledge holders were identified. Then considering that my conversations with the knowledge holders would be a form of hermeneutic engagement, I sought articulate people for the interviews (C. Chambers, personal communication, September 2009). A hermeneutic conversation allows the researcher to engage in meaningful and rich interviews, whereas semi-structured interviewing is less organic. The process of being an active and deep listener is primary when working with Indigenous people. This process exemplifies respectful protocols that demonstrate care in the research process, and creates a sense of cultural safety for the participants (Wilson, 2008).

Knowledge of the Blackfoot Confederacy and the “societal people” (those belonging to a sacred traditional society) is the only choice of sample. One of the goals of the study was to incorporate insight and discussion from individuals of all four bands of the Blackfoot people: those of the *Amskapii Piikani* (Southern *Piikani*/ USA), the *Kainai* (Blood tribe), the *Aphotsi Piikani* (Northern *Piikani*), and the *Siksika* (Northern Blackfoot). The aim was to provide a comprehensive understanding as to how each area interprets and perceives prayer for well-being. L. Little Bear (personal communication, March 27, 2010) who is recognized and respected in Blackfoot country, provided the names initially.

**Participant A.** In respect for the Blackfoot culture at large, I was able to draw upon a respected female, a member of the Blackfoot people<sup>6</sup>. This individual has held

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<sup>6</sup> This participant wishes to remain anonymous and did not want her tribal affiliation declared.

significant bundles and transfers, and more recently was inducted to the Blackfoot women's society, the Mootokiik Society. She is one of the younger "traditional elders," which is unique, and she will be referred to as Participant A. There was equal gender representation and majority tribal representation.

**Andrew Blackwater.** Andrew Blackwater is from the Blood people. He has served as one of a team whom created the Blackfoot Digital Library out of Red Crow College. He is a long standing member of the Blackfoot sacred societies. He continues to advocate and protect Blackfoot intellectual knowledge. Andrew works for the Blood Tribe as a historical advisor on the tribes Blackfoot Confederacy portfolio.

**Carol Murray.** Carol Murray is from the tribe *Amskapii Piikani* located in the United States. She has dedicated her career to the Blackfeet Community College in which she has taught and served as president of the college through her time there. C. Murray has supported A. Pard in his spiritual endeavours, serving as his spiritual societal partner for the Blackfoot people at large. Carol's work seeks the removal of oppression in education, by increasing literacy.

**Allan Pard.** Allan Pard has held significant bundles of the Blackfoot people all of his adult life. Allan served on the *Piikani* Nation Council as well was a historical and successful Chief Executive Operator for the *Piikani* Nation. His work politically has been enhanced and supported by the prayers and way of life of the Blackfoot people. Pard co-authored the Nation's declaration as a component of the Blackfoot Confederacy; this declaration is called *Piikanisinii*. At present, Allan Pard is a senior official in the Aboriginal Affairs Ministry in Alberta.

## Location of Study

Blackfoot history tells us that *Napi*, the Blackfoot Trickster, laid his imprint of his body on the land so the Blackfoot people could always remember where they belong. Areas like “Nose Hill” in Calgary, Alberta, or the city’s “Elbow River” signify this historical marking. The Blood Tribe holds that the “Belly Buttes” signify his lower body region, and so forth. These environmental symbols remind Blackfoot people of their knowledge and ways of knowing (A. First Rider, personal communication, March 27, 2010; RCAP, 1996). The Blackfoot territory was expansive long ago and these place names signifies that this territory remains the stronghold for the people’s existence today.

The Blackfoot Confederacy consists of the *Amskapii Piikani* located in Northwestern Montana; *Aphotsii Piikani* near the Porcupine Hills of Southern Alberta; *Kainai* near the international border of Southern Alberta; and *Siksika* east of Calgary in the north of Blackfoot Country (RCAP, 1996). Although the Blackfoot consist of the comprised nations, each tribe was autonomous and lived in distinctive areas (Wissler & Duvall, 1995; RCAP, 1996). The traditional territory of the Blackfoot people ranged from southern Alberta, south-western Saskatchewan and north-central Montana respectively (Wissler & Duvall, 1995).

This study took place within the heart of Blackfoot Country, the communities and surrounding areas. Ceremonial areas were ideal, including those that hold the annual Sundances and ceremonial bundle openings. Other meeting places were utilized as well such as local community facilities for the interviews.

## Research Design

This study embraced an Indigenous research paradigm that embodied and adhered to cultural protocols when necessary. The design of the thesis symbolizes a ceremonial engagement. My Vow was made to secure spiritual, intellectual, physical, and emotional clarity through the project. Gifts were distributed, including to my thesis supervisor to secure a supportive mentorship.

Names of potential participants were then identified by my thesis committee and by individuals within my relational network. An initial phone call was made or a face-to-face introduction arranged with the participants. Once an agreement of a date, time, and location was secured, the researcher met with the participants about the study and to seek their permission to proceed. The ethical requirements as outlined by the University of Lethbridge were adhered to. When meeting with participants, cultural protocols were again followed to secure the integrity for the study.

The following outlines the steps taken to gathering the cultural knowledge:

- Prior to any discussion, cultural introductions commenced. I introduced myself with my Blackfoot spiritual name, and to whom I belong to, my clan, community, and family. I also briefly discussed my occupation and how this study came to be.
- Participants were given their offering of goods for participation, including the offering of my services for ceremonies. An overview of the study was discussed.
- Participants were ensured that information collected will be disseminated back to the participants, through a copy of the final thesis.



- Once the topic was understood, the researcher asked the participant to recite a prayer now or at a later date that he or she deemed appropriate. The purpose was explained, and permission was sought to receive and record that prayer.
- A brief synopsis of the study occurred again as to what the discussion issues, focal and goals would be.
  - Opposed to asking a series of structured or semi-structured interview questions, I prepared questions in advance to the participants to engage meaningful dialogue, in which there may not be definitive answers. I anticipated that the responses would most likely to come in the form of stories.
  - The interview questions are as follows:
    - How does prayer in a Blackfoot traditional form shape our identity?
    - Does prayer reflect instructional value for living? If yes, then how?
    - What does prayer speak about well-being?
    - How can understanding Blackfoot spirituality help counsellors serve Indigenous clients more effectively?
    - What does living life as a ceremony mean to you?
- Once the issues were exhausted, the recital of a prayer was sought. If there was not enough time, another time would be identified for that recording.

### **Archiving information**

The data accumulated for the study was, and is, in a secure and undisclosed environment due to the protection of the sacred knowledge as well as for the protection of the confidential disclosures made by some participants.

### **Interpretation**

The interpretation process included “flushing out” the themes of the interviews in relation to research focus of well-being, psychological or holistic health, practices (daily or routinely), protocols, roles, conduct and so forth.

## **Chapter 5: *Aatsimooskaan*, Learning of One’s Spirituality and Psychological Well-being**

The historical Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) Report identified spirituality as the following:

The fundamental feature of Aboriginal world view was, and continues to be, that all of life is a manifestation of spiritual reality. We come from spirit; we live and move surrounded by spirit; and when we leave this life we return to a spirit world. All perceptions are conditioned by spiritual forces, and all actions have repercussions in a spiritual reality. Actions initiated in a spiritual realm affect physical reality; conversely, human actions set off consequences in a spiritual realm. These consequences in turn become manifest in the physical realm. All these interactions must be taken into account as surely as considerations of what to eat or how to keep warm in winter. (RCAP, 1996, p. 628)

The report, commissioned by the Government of Canada, was a means of reconciliation between Canada and its Indigenous people (RCAP, 1996). Indigenous engagement occurred through public hearings, briefs, studies, special reports, round

tables and submissions to the commission. RCAP (1996) describes the Indigenous belief system as comprised of diverse approaches to rules, personal guides in the form of intergenerational wisdom, and spiritual helpers to aid in the pursuit of a good life. The responsibility for attaining this wisdom is the individual's as is the responsibility to apply this knowledge ethically (RCAP, 1996).

The intention of this chapter is to reflect the cultural and spiritual practices of the Blackfoot people's way of life as explored through the interviews. *Atsimoiskaan*, translated from Blackfoot to English, is prayer. To understand this Blackfoot view of prayer, then assists to educate the reader about spiritual decolonization.

### **Ritual and Ceremony**

Rituals structure ceremony, and these structured activities create the environment necessary to manifest spiritual engagement and intervention. Prayer within these rituals can then be understood as the nucleus for spiritual transformation. The Blackfoot prayer encompasses the transformational properties for healing and wellness.

To seek prayers formally in Blackfoot one approaches those people with transfers of authority, *poomahksin*, as defined in the methodology chapter. Once engaged, these traditional elders call upon the people of the past from which they received their transfers, and they ask for their accuracy, power, and skill, states the interviewed Elders, Blackwater and Pard. Blackwater states that the elder's job, in calling those from the past, is to both acknowledge their powers and convince them to direct those powers to heal those seeking prayers. These *Kahksinoniiks* are Blackfoot spirit ancestors that the Blackfoot people call upon for help through the prayers and ceremonies. To call upon

such spiritual entities, which includes cosmological and ancestral beings, is how Blackfoot prayer shifts energies toward the positive, states Blackwater and Participant A.

Participant A explains that changing such energies is how Blackfoot people take care of the spirit, and that physical changes will occur with these energy shifts. Women “trilling” at ceremonies helps increase positive energy; this is how Blackfoot women can send their support and participate. Once the trilling occurs, a form of Indigenous vocalization, the energy “jolts” dancers to dance harder, as the energy is amplified and ultimately prayers are stronger (Participant A, personal communication, October, 2013). Murray states that prayer as a ritual would be meaningless without an understanding through apprenticeship. People need to understand why they do what they do; this understanding provides the basis for belief and faith.

While Blackfoot ceremonies can shift energies towards the positive, individuals remain responsible for shielding themselves against negative forces that will otherwise penetrate, says Blackwater and Pard. All of the interviewed Elders support the significance of the smudge as a protective shield. As an example, smudging everyday and smudging the home is imperative for the health and harmonization. Ritual is to be learned for the smudge and that includes the literal communication of prayers, says both Blackwater and Participant A. Blackwater states that this provides an understanding of why one smudges and explains what transpires afterward.

To understand the meaning behind the structured ceremonies is to provide the healing pathways that are necessary for decolonization. Blackwater explains that the more often that Blackfoot people participate in the co-creation of such healing, the better they can learn to direct these positive and powerful intentional forces, to impact

individuals and communities in need. Blackwater points out that when groups of people work in such positively energized environments, positive changes will. On the contrary, Blackwater uses politics as an example of how powerful forces can work when people engage negatively. “Backstabbing,” or making false statements about others, is destructive and harmful. This is considered poor conduct that can harm one self and others. For example, no one will want to be around that negative individual and their negative energies (A. Blackwater, personal communication, March, 2012).

In turn, Blackwater states that the challenge is to embody a general sense of well-being, to feel good about people around one, and to feel good about what one is doing in life. Embodying well-being is essential to ensure no negative impacts come to the very families and children that one is praying for; conversely, embodying negativity is destructive in the prayer process. This demonstrates how the spirit is not segregated from any experience, and thus spirituality influences one’s existence at every moment of life.

Blackwater states that everyone has their own life force and the Creator of Life flows through all. Death is only a physical separation of body and being, yet after death the being continues as a life force. “Stand by me today, give me good thoughts, give me wisdom so I can walk in a good path and direction” states Blackwater as he recites a portion of prayer that exemplifies the process of engaging with “beings” when they are no longer in physical form.

Knowing the person who one seeks help from is important as a spiritual and emotional connection must occur (C. Murray, personal communication, February, 2012). Consulting a traditional elder for prayers or advice must include a context to understand the frame of reference to draw from; this understanding provides a means to an end.

“There is no mind reading here,” states Blackwater. Blackwater and Murray explain that the elder must understand the context of why prayers are being asked for. This parallels therapeutic disclosure and building the therapeutic alliance in western counselling (Corey et al., 2007). One difference between the two is that elders provide subjective feedback to the petitioner based on their personal or spiritual experiences. The elder may consult others if needed and then they can proceed with application of that knowledge states Blackwater. Blackwater and Participant A both agree that once the elder prays, the requests are spoken aloud and the spiritual requests are rendered.

### **Approaching Blackfoot Spirituality & Psychotherapy**

Today more than ever, people are seeking therapists who foster spiritual growth and will act as a spiritual guide (Sperry, 2010). Freud rejected any form of religion in psychotherapy whereas recent research supports therapists opening up space for the practice of prayer in mental health and healing (La Torre, 2004). This is considered unorthodox in western psychology. A therapist practicing within this understanding has therapeutic opportunities to engage authentically in the overall well-being for the Indigenous client. Clients can explore and integrate spiritual beliefs and values into therapy, prayer (La Torre, 2004).

Religion, spirituality, and prayer often go hand-in-hand with life’s traumatic or stressful events. Such practices aid people to make sense of, and cope with, the trauma (Harris et al, 2010; Whittington & Scher, 2010). These practices provide an increased sense of control in an uncontrollable and unpredictable situation (Dein & Littlewood, 2008). Historical Trauma Transmission (HTT), which is the transmission of trauma from one generation to the next, pervades Indigenous communities and individual

psychological functioning. However, spirituality has served as a constant in healing, one that is appropriate and meaningful to the Indigenous population.

Rituals were given to the Blackfoot so that the people may avoid negativity and conquer adversaries to make the situation better (A. Pard, personal communication, October, 2011). Murray describes this as “paying attention to your spirit,” where emotions are a good indicator as to when the spirit seeks to communicate with the individual and to restore balance.

Pard states that Blackfoot people seek two things in times of need: to conquer the adversary (*Sapoomapii*) or to conjure the positive (*Stoowapii*). *Stoowapii* encompassing all good things such as success and love, in other words *stoowapii* is to pray for success and positivity; either way, one can pray to prevent the negative or to pray for the positive. *Sapoomapii* encompasses all negative things such as evil, sickness, and death. At the Blackfoot Sundance, the focus will be on conquering *sapoomapii*, or conquering the negative adversary.

*Sapoomapii* reminds the Blackfoot person to not think or talk negatively. Blackwater warns that when one chooses to say negative things that they need to understand that this could harm themselves rather than their anticipated target of ill will. If the target is missed, the *sapoomapii* will go right back to where it originated and harm that individual, their family and/or children. Pard (personal communication, October, 2011) gives the example of the use of strong negative language amidst the bundles and its influence on the bundles. Saying the word, “death” around a bundle will have a negative ripple effect requiring an immediate cleansing of the bundle. If someone closely in association with a bundle dies, a cleansing ceremony is necessary to prevent the negative

ripple effect; this is best described as a “black cloud lingering around.” In all cases, the goal is to re-harmonize to positive energies.

The correlation between spirituality and psychological well-being result in increased abilities to learn healthy coping mechanisms, understanding the meaning of life, and seeking spiritual growth and strength (Sperry, 2010). Spiritual engagement increases social support and stress tolerance and decreases depression and anxiety by providing self-regulation through meditation and focusing, and attaining a purposeful life. Therefore, spirituality provides immense psychological benefits (Harris et al., 2010; Maltby, Lewis & Day, 2008). Given the Indigenous experience of colonization, these increased supports, coping mechanisms, and identity formation are necessary to decolonize. Such holistic coping is the antithesis of the maladaptive ways Indigenous peoples use to cope today.

### **Spiritually Sensitive Counselling & Indigenous Psychology**

Spiritually sensitive counselling fosters growth and development particularly in better understanding the meaning of life and transcendence. Transcendence is a significant concept in authentic healing. Whereas cognitive behavioural therapies work to reduce symptoms, while transcendence focuses on meaning (Sperry, 2010). Transcendence is significance as it works to reconnect clients, and in this discussion, Indigenous people back to their core meaning and purpose as identified through their cultures. Decolonization is to heal the fractured identities of Indigenous people’s identity crisis.

Pard describes a process of spiritual uplifting, thus transformation, which occurs when one has had their prayers answered and is then on a positive path to success. A



tranquil peace of mind is present at this time. This demonstrates to the individual praying that the Blackfoot path is one of self-love and loving fellow human beings. On the Blackfoot path, helping others is necessary for the collective to be healthy. Murray believes that enjoying the happiness of others is a component of the Blackfoot path.

Consciousness that is, to be attuned and receptive to the broader universe is integral to spiritually sensitive counselling. Murray describes this in the context of Blackfoot prayer. A Blackfoot person begins prayer by calling the “Giver of Life,” *Istooapatiohp*. To call upon such entities simultaneously brings to consciousness the significance of that particular entity as a life giving force. This recognition of the giver of life also brings to consciousness the greater gift of being alive, and the gratitude to *Istooapatiohp* for giving that life. Therefore, happiness and gratitude are present in recognition of the gift of being alive. Murray said there is a critical difference in being alive and being a live being. Consciousness is important in prayer as it creates intentions for those praying that energize the spiritual conversation.

Spiritually sensitive counselling parallels the constructs of the Indigenous worldview (Sperry, 2010) where the self is seen relation to larger universal influences. Therefore in the Indigenous worldview, nature influences the person. The following depicts a component of this Blackfoot spiritual worldview.

All participants state that the Blackfoot people, in their prayers, call upon all of the universal beings and their cosmological forces. These beings are largely known as *Spoomotapiiks* (Sky Beings), *Tsakoiitooapiiks* (Land Beings) and the *Soiitapiiks* (Water Beings). While these beings are positive forces, they also represent the polar structure of powerful authority; that is, while nature has beauty and gifts it also has paradoxically a

destructive side. One of the benefits of religious influences on counselling is that it can reflect both the positive aspects of the self and the negative realities of the self. The recovery of Indigenous identity requires this as colonization has stigmatized Indigenous people negatively through media depictions, institutionalism, and forced internalized oppression. To understand the entire self is to understand that the universal beings that one prays to, and belongs to, also have both powerful and destructive sides as well.

Spiritually sensitive counselling offers meditation to reduce self-focus, thus the ego (Maltby et al., 2008). Ego-based consciousness focuses on attaining a false identity that supports an empty infrastructure within the individual. This concept of false identity is a primary construct in addictions counselling (G. Nixon, personal communication, September, 2008). Since addiction is a prime means for coping with colonization, this concept of false identity is appropriate to this topic of decolonization.

Murray (personal communication, February, 2012) described situations when her own feelings of insecurity arose, which result in her own loss of “spiritual confidence.” Smudging would restore this confidence. She cautions that in the Blackfoot way people are to not confuse the ego with spiritual happiness, and that fulfilling the ego is “building” a false identity. Murray describes spiritual happiness as when a person’s spirit projects openness and another person’s spirit connects with that openness and it then resonates within them as well. She describes this as significant and hopes more Blackfoot people will allow that positivity, *stoowapii*, to grow within themselves. This process will fill an individual with more positive than negative and this is to decolonize from the Blackfoot perspective. Murray emphasizes that Blackfoot prayer has shaped her identity

positively, and thus improved her health, by increasing her self-esteem, will power, and confidence.

The reduction of ego as a therapeutic goal of spiritual sensitive counselling matures the individual. The spiritual practice of praying shifts the individual from materialistic want, to a conscious dialogical and interactive experience; whereas the more mature individual talks with God not at God (Dein & Littlewood, 2008). To reduce the ego is to reduce the individualism that collides with the collective Indigenous worldview. Murray describes this as *functioning at a higher order*. When one pushes past the challenges of wanting to give up and give in, they then are progressing to a higher order of functioning. She gives the example of an individual going to a Blackfoot ceremony, and looking at the bundle and telling it, "I came here to honour you." This perspective of a person honouring the bundle demonstrates the humility one embraces to transcend past their humanness. To reach this level of humility is to get past one self and be in partnership in a spiritual relationship.

Spiritually sensitive counselling includes a greater intimacy with spiritual forces and reflects a desire for harmony within the self and with the universe as a whole (Dein & Littlewood, 2008). The Blackfoot seek help from these positive spiritual forces by re-creation of dances and songs to access the spiritual power of a particular bundle (A. Pard, personal communication, October, 2011). Engaging in the Blackfoot prayers is to engage the accuracy of the original spiritual relationships between the Blackfoot people and the beings that gave that particular ceremony to them. By creating the accurate combinations, the combinations then create the *perfect* settings to manifest the sought spiritual

transformations through the prayers, states Pard. The giver of life gave the Blackfoot people and all the spiritual beings such ways to rely on, to help themselves.

Gaining greater intimacy with the spirit world increases harmony between the individual and the universe. While many religious practices, such as Christianity, are “mono-theist,” praying to a single divinity or God-figure, they do not emphasize the negation of the ego (Whittington & Scher, 2010). This egoless aspect of prayer is common in Indigenous cultures committed to an ethos of collective well-being as opposed to individual well-being. Transpersonal Psychology integrates ego transcendence and spiritual integration in counselling.

Transpersonal Psychology (TP) is concerned with the study of humanity’s highest potential to recognize, understand, and realize universal, spiritual, and transcendent states of consciousness (Lajoie & Shapiro, 1992; Miller, 1998). TP is a potential ally for the emergent field of Indigenous Psychology. TP offers spiritual discourses to counselling, and a way for religiosity and spirituality to provide an interpretive framework for individuals trying to make sense of their existence. The TP framework provides clients with self-perception, importance, and meaning and purpose for life’s events (Maltby et al., 2008).

Just as the study of prayer is diverse, it is also contentious. Prayer connotes religion, a topic about which Transpersonal Psychology remains neutral. Religion and spirituality are often intertwined and prayer is an element of both. Religion is seen as outward acts of worship and giving thanks; whereas spirituality is seen as inward activity focused on growth and maturation (La Torre, 2004).

Furthermore in asking the question “What is Prayer?” most authors see prayer as communicating with the divine. Prayer has long been characterized as “...every kind of inward communion or conversation with the power recognized as the divine...the very soul of religion” (Dein & Littlewood, 2008, p. 40). However, prayer seems to have no religious affiliation as it reflects a conscious activity that comes from the depths of unawareness (La Torre, 2004). The subconscious activity is the emotional self and the connection is expressed through prayer.

Blackfoot spiritual practices require the individual to be conscious of their state of affairs and therefore responsible for the advancement of their life. The Blackfoot culture is an oral and literally direct one, says both Blackwater, and Participant A. Blackwater explains prayers are communicated consciously and directly out loud. Then Creator, spirits, and universal forces know that the individual understands the purpose of their existence and it is interrelated with all other parts of Creation. The prayers seek engagement with universal beings, and invite them to take an active part in influencing the human life with all the universal energies.

This praying aloud communicates exactly what is wanted and needed. By speaking aloud their wishes and needs, the Blackfoot person is a co-creator of their reality, explains Participant A. The sacred beings, hearing those thoughts eventually manifest them into reality. Because they may take the prayers literally (see last paragraph), Participant A cautions that a person must be careful what they ask for. Similarly, she cautions that to manifest a positive reality, a person must avoid negative feelings in prayer, and dwell on the positive.

## **Blackfoot Vows and Well-being**

As different prayers have differing meanings, so they have different functions. Different kinds of prayers (meditative, petitionary, and colloquial) reflect the varying distances between the supplicant and the divine, with meditative being the most advanced form of prayer (Dein & Littlewood, 2008). From a Blackfoot perspective, the most advanced form of prayer comes through a Vow<sup>7</sup>. This special commitment is made as a way of altering the negative interferences, whether it is disease or a life circumstance, affecting one's life. Warnings such as a vivid dream conveying spiritual messages, may lead individuals to make a Vow to a sacred society in hopes of negating the ill will, explains Blackwater and Murray. The Vow is to reconfigure the fate of the person involved says Murray.

La Torre discerns that the act of turning the mind and heart to the sacred opens the self up to one's own inner depths. Prayer is an important self-help tool in this process, as is psychotherapy, which manifests transcendence and assists with transformation (La Torre, 2004). These processes are largely found within the meditative practices of culture, ceremony, and prayer. This form of spiritual communication between the believer and God or a spiritual force is done through talking, listening, and dialogue (Dein & Littlewood, 2008).

A Blackfoot Vow is initiated to ask for whatever is best for the person's situation, even though at the time it may not feel like it is, it will be manifested (C. Murray, personal communication, February, 2012). Prayer alters the energies in hopes of setting a

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<sup>7</sup> The capitalization of Vow is to demonstrate that this is a specific and significant practice in the Blackfoot culture.

person on the right path, and in the right direction; whatever is best for them will come. The individual will get what they need. While the petitioner may not recognize the answer to the prayer, in hindsight, they will understand that they got what they needed even if at first they did not recognize it as such, describes Murray.

There is a Blackfoot belief that “no more will be given than what is manageable.” This belief is essential to understand that belief in the powers of the Vow is important to embody the transformation, continues Murray. Murray explains that while faith in the prayers is necessary, faith in the person praying is also necessary. There is reciprocity in prayer; an individual has a responsibility to have faith and belief in the entirety of the Vow process (Participant A, personal communication, October, 2013). The work of the Vow is spiritual, whereas the work of the individual is to commit to doing all they can humanly do in the contemporary setting to counteract the negative forces.

Blackwater states that the Vow alone cannot create the change; this is not a one-sided responsibility. While the sacred societal member, who accepts the Vow and offers the prayers, acts as a conduit for the individual vowing for change, the person making a Vow must be respectful, ethical, and conduct themselves in accordance with the sacred process. As the Vow process unfolds, the sacred societal member identifies life changes and protocols for the petitioner for fulfillment of the Vow (A. Blackwater, personal communication, March, 2012); this is an opportunity for an in-depth mentorship into the culture for the petitioner that leads to a lifestyle change. There are prayers and responsibilities for both, including the elder of the bundle, to which the Vow was made in partnership with, and the individual seeking help. The elder, the bundle, and the petitioner all have roles and responsibilities to meet the conditions of the Vow. All three

are interconnected, and the Vow is incomplete without all three parties doing their part (C. Murray, personal communication, February, 2012).

A British Columbia study of what constitutes healing from an Indigenous perspective provides an in-depth analysis of ceremony (McCormick, 2009). The three stages of healing in ceremony were *separation*, *transition*, and *incorporation*. Separation involves detachment from one's present life. The transition process is the death of an old life and rebirth of a new identity. The final stage involves reincorporation into the community of the individual in their new state or identity (McCormick, 2009). This Indigenous process of healing in ceremony parallels the Blackfoot Vow process where an individual engages ceremony to embody the knowledge and healing incurred. Transcendence signifies the rebirth of a new identity.

A Blackfoot person making a Vow should not conduct themselves negatively; they should not be hurtful or destructive to others or the self. If they do, the Vow will not materialize. Once a Vow is made, the individual's behaviours must change. Behaviours, Blackwater states, become life changing. Participant A states that if one does not follow through with the Vow "and therefore the commitment," bad luck can follow. If the Vow-maker chooses negative actions, involving *Saipoomapii* (the negative energies), then one is inviting something negative to happen. Participant A states that keeping one's commitment to the Vow can be challenging because once the Vow has been made, the individual must believe without a doubt in the power of the Vow. They then must understand that it is out of their hands and what is being asked of will be taken care of.

The person making the Vow is also searching for values. The person is challenged to find the inner strength and determination to maintain their faith and responsibilities



during this transformation (C. Murray, personal communication, February, 2012). This clarification of personal values is significant as it demonstrates how one comes to understand and attain personal responsibility. This individual takes a stand with the Vow and prayers are sought to assist the Vow-seeker to avoid challenges while having the faith, trust, and confidence to get through it all, continues Murray. Once a person is able to have clarity on the question they needed to ask themselves regarding the reasons for seeking out a Vow, the value search is complete as the values become clear. The vow is how the person gets what is best for them, and gets to where they need to go. This process parallels western psychology in that it challenges and confronts the client in a healthy manner, for the purpose of attaining personal enlightenment. However, the Blackfoot process also offers spiritual aides and comfort through the trying time.

Blackwater states spiritual reciprocity comes to fruition when the Vow-seeker fulfills ceremonial commitments of the Vow process. At that time, one can then communicate in prayer with Creator that he or she has succeeded, and express their gratitude. Blackwater states that you cannot come to this point and tell Creator that you have succeeded if you have not changed your ways. Success is not getting what you want, but rather changing as a person, adopting new values and ways of being in the world, and that is why spirituality as a Blackfoot persona is referred to as a way of life.

Transparency within the self is to be accountable and honest with one self. Blackwater states that harm done to oneself behind closed doors does not go unnoticed; the spiritual realm sees it. Hidden actions impact everything; they affect the thoughts and actions of self and others. Drinking or substance abuse, or other maladaptive behaviours done in hiding, is seen by the spiritual beings and this harms that perpetrator and others

around them. Blackwater (personal communication, March, 2012) recognizes that this denial impacts one's life. He challenges Blackfoot people to understand that they are powerful individuals who can change their lives positively or negatively, but the power to change remains with the individual.

An individual seeking help cannot merely pay someone for prayers and expect the process to take care of itself. The spiritual forces must believe that the prayers are sincere as is the desire for change because altering behaviours is integral to the transformation process. Individual autonomy and independent decision-making are also goals in western counselling (Corey et al., 2007). The individual seeking help is the change agent, and prayers and vows are conduits to the spirit beings, there to help (by re-aligning energies) but not to make the changes (A. Blackwater, personal communication, March, 2012). Blackwater states that the potential for transformation is always present and all the Blackfoot person has to do is activate energies and forces. Prayer is the forum to engage this potential.

A Blackfoot Vow includes everything that one is to give up and seeks to receive (C. Murray, personal communication, February, 2012). As the prayers are literal, the Vow must be specific, clearly stating who is responsible for what, continues Murray. In return, the individual vows to make a financial or volunteering contribution to the specific sacred society to which the Vow was made. The individual then acts in accordance with that sacred society by adhering to cultural protocols and commands, states Blackwater and Murray.

*Kiah Kii tapohk komsii* refers to making a vow to conquer an adversary, or to alter destiny in a positive way (A. Pard, personal communication, June, 2013). One has to try

everything to make their situation better. If the Vow-seeker has exhausted every avenue, and their request has not been fulfilled, then one must accept this and work with the reality of the situation. This is difficult for people who do not fully understand the Blackfoot ways. Pard (personal communication, October, 2011) simply states, “You win some and you lose some.” Those who do not understand or participate in the Blackfoot culture will then state the culture does not work in such cases. Pard reiterates that prayer is reciprocal and participatory, rather than passive and everyone has parts to play in seeking to alter the negative forces.

### ***Stoowapii*: Cultural Confidence**

Prayer is about spiritual care and feeling well; therefore taking care of the spirit is paramount, states Participant A. She continues, “We are spirits having a human experience, not humans having a spiritual experience.” When the spirit is cared for, everything else will fall in line, she states.

Blackfoot prayer is a force for attaining a positive and better life. “If we want positive things in our lives, we have to have a positive attitude,” states Pard. Having a positive attitude requires consciousness continuously. Pard states that acting out of strong negative states, like anger or fear, leads to poor outcomes. He explains that religions like Christianity use fear to control externally, while the goal of Blackfoot spirituality is to self-regulate within disruptive external environments. To harmonize is to make peace within, that is, to reduce inner conflict and then to participate positively in the world. Murray’s *cultural confidence* is to have the self-assurance and belief in oneself to pray before reacting to any situation. Prayer is vocalization and thought. The spiritual work is to react in sync with this prayer-based cognition as opposed to an emotionally based

reaction. Behaviour is infused with spirituality and this creates a spiritually based Blackfoot identity, thus, spiritually based behaviours. To start any crisis with prayer changes the outcomes more positively and this can manifest the potential for miracles to occur in a crisis (C. Murray, personal communication, February, 2012). There is danger in reacting emotionally.

Pard states that Blackfoot people, like any other Indigenous nation, want to live “happily ever after” while maintaining *Stoowapii*, the positive forces. To do so requires Blackfoot people to immerse themselves in an environment of positive things and people (A. Pard, personal communication, October, 2011) as opposed to an environment of “maladaptivity,” negative things, and people.

Murray says the colonial state of mind needs to be challenged. She states that some people do not know they are intelligent, and when put into challenging situations their weaker sides are challenged and in response, their strength surfaces. To be challenged brings balance toward the goal of an overall satisfaction in life. Colonial behaviours do not encourage or appreciate growth and evolution of the self, states Murray.

On-reserve internalized oppression perpetuates colonialism by and for those living and working there. Alongside already complex administration, oppressive legislation and external government controls, the internalized oppression adds unnecessary barriers to wellness. The Blackfoot responsibility is to try hard, translated as *iikakiimaat*. *Iikakiimaat* embraces conscious continuance of positive paths even when one falls off or strays away from it, therefore a conscious responsibility (A. Pard, personal communication, October, 2011). To embody *iikakiimaat* is to embrace the continuous

learning of the Blackfoot way of life and ways of knowing, concludes Pard. Once a Blackfoot person knows their ways, they would never condemn themselves or their Indigenous way of life. This understanding manifests self-esteem and confidence, the essential building blocks in the formation of a healthy, organic, and authentic Blackfoot, and Indigenous, identity.

As previously discussed, to be co-creators in one's own life demonstrates the power to manifest spiritual change, states Participant A. This co-creation process is a reminder of how sacred and powerful Blackfoot people are inherently. Born out of sacred environments, they then manifest the culture that provides for them as Blackfoot and therefore have endless potential for growth and transformation (Participant A, personal communication, October, 2013). Blackwater (personal communication, March, 2012) emphasizes how Blackfoot people must understand these concepts philosophically to effect cause and change in their life.

Once a Blackfoot person experiences and perceives the world from their own traditional view, they then perceive it using a *Blackfoot mind*. (A. Blackwater, personal communication, March, 2012). With a Blackfoot mind, the Blackfoot people understand that they have great healing powers which can change an existence and which have the capabilities to attain whatever is sought, states Blackwater. Through this renewed perspective, new situations and environments are created that can transform entire communities, if united together (A. Blackwater, personal communication, March, 2012).

On the other hand, by combining prayers, regardless of denomination, Blackwater is confident that in a concentrated effort, healing is eminent. Being *Nitsitapi*, thus a "real person", is to return to our spiritual ways. He guarantees that anyone psychologically

injured, who was not taught fundamental Blackfoot teachings, can still learn the Blackfoot spiritual teachings including the values of life, which are most important. Adlerian psychology teaches that life's problems are based on learned, but faulty values. In this counselling tradition, once one assumes responsibility for their change, relearning of values is necessary for therapeutic success (Corsini & Wedding, 2008).

Murray describes a time in life when she suffered from intense depression due to mounting life circumstances. Her son had a traumatic brain injury, as a result of a car accident; he lost his ability to function independently. She then lost her other son to alcoholism when he was in his mid-30s. Furthermore, she risked losing her marriage due to the challenges her and her husband faced. Through the entire process, her commitment to pray, and her responsibilities as a bundle holder, eased her depression because the spiritual way gave her life purpose. Murray concluded that if more people were asked to pray for one another in ceremonies, there would be an increase of intimacy in families and more individuals would find purpose in their life.

This is significant as it develops healthy coping strategies and healthy identity formation. Deeply negative states like depression can be alleviated through prayer. The prayer and the relief it brings eventually lead to an increase in cultural confidence, a confidence based in the Blackfoot culture. "The trauma takes away the confidence, but the smudge brings it back," states Murray. This cultural confidence allows her to "know" instinctually what needs to be done to resolve anything or where to go for help.

### **Ingredients for life**

Jim Swag (J. Swag, personal communication, March, 2013), a departmental director for the *Piikani* Nation, has demonstrated the application of *Stooapii*, to focus on

the positive, in his work. He oversaw the construction of a new community multipurpose center and in the development of the building's operation policy he decided that the building would prohibit funerals or alcohol consumption; the premise being that it was created for positive activities. Swag (personal communication, March, 2013) references the *Piikani* people's declaration of *Piikanisiinii*, which outlines the foundations for living, as Blackfoot people, in accordance with the culture and spiritual way of life. He described the Blackfoot prayers as "ingredients for life" and if people lived those prayers, their life would be successful and positive, rather than being the colonial experience lived today.

Blackfoot ceremonies re-create the origin stories through song and prayer, which provide instructions for living. To exemplify this, Pard shares a section of a song to provide reference; this example asks for a long life.

Old Man Sun, you told me if I eat pemmican  
 I will have the ability to live a long life  
 Old Lady Moon, you told me if I eat pemmican  
 I will have the ability to live a long life  
 Morning Star, you told me if I eat pemmican  
 I will have the ability to live a long life  
 (A. Pard, personal communication, October, 2011)

While singing this, a berry is held while praying to have a long and healthy life.

Murray explains that these "instructions for living" can be identified through spiritual interactions with traditional elders, as they are spiritual vehicles whose job includes announcing to the spirit world why this individual is here. The spiritual connection is made with the traditionalist serving as the conduit for spiritual influences in healing, states Murray. "Instructions for living" are then granted throughout the prayers,

but they may not be so apparent or obvious. The elder can then translate prayers so individuals in need can comprehend the “instructions.”

In summary, ITK organizes and secures Indigenous structures of ceremony, language, and spirituality. Sacred narratives such as prayer, manifests this knowledge to connect people spiritually. Synthesis of this knowledge requires the individual to embody it and use prayers as a means to communicate inter-generationally. Through prayer, such knowledge is transferred to others, which help harmonize their relationships with themselves and those around them.

### **Chapter 6: *Nitsitapi*, Identity**

Much of my professional journey was dedicated to Indigenous child and youth programming. Elders and motivational speakers challenged our Indigenous youth to “dig deeper, try harder, and be prouder” (reflecting increasing their self esteem); it was apparent that the youth were not connecting with these encouragements. Instead, they engaged with other subcultures to address their identity crisis. Upon further investigation, it became apparent that one barrier, to making the connections the elders and speakers spoke of, was that the youth did not know how to pray! Families and parents were not praying, at least with their youth. These families and their children were not able to then utilize the culturally appropriate supports that could positively impact their lives. I was deeply saddened by this revelation and this was further motivation for this study. The phenomenon known as “cultural blanks” refers to living without a cultural frame of reference. This is significant to understand for this situation. This phenomenon reflects



upon the most critical aspect of healing, and that is healing the identity of Indigenous people today to embrace all of who they are inherently, spiritually, and currently.

In the Blackfoot creation story, *Napi Natoosi* (Sun), Old Man, represents the source of life, and *Kookoomakiisoom Kipitakii* (Moon), Old Lady, his wife, represents the compassion. Their son is *Apiisowaats* (Morning Star or Venus). Mistaken Morning Star went to the spirit world and came back with the Blackfoot prayers. These are the beings who the Blackfoot people pray to (A. Pard, personal communication, October, 2011). Without knowing the origin stories and these beings, one cannot have a comprehensive Blackfoot identity. The most lethal affect of colonization is the loss of, and confusion about, Indigenous identity and points of origin (Alfred, 2009, Duran & Duran, 1995; Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 2003).

“To know the stories, you then are ready for your path as an adult,” states Pard. Knowing the stories, he believes is critical in the formation of Blackfoot identity. Understanding the Blackfoot points of origin secures the Blackfoot person as an adult in life as they will always know their points of origins and pathways to connect with these sources in times of need. These stories teach the individual the substance behind the Blackfoot ways and its lifelong path, including coping strategies, states Pard. Colonization nearly extinguished the fundamental understanding Indigenous people have of themselves. Without the Blackfoot cosmology and practice of prayer as pathways of understanding, Indigenous populations have had complications developing healthy identities.

Such complications include the collective loss of psychological, spiritual, intellectual, and physical sustenance for Indigenous peoples. These impacts of

colonization have created a vulnerable Indigenous population that must survive in a foreign society which focuses on individualism and materialistic. This impacted life now deconstructs Indigenous collective values and ways that compose Indigenous being (Capra, 1983/1988). This collective loss left Indigenous people spiritually disempowered, and generations of Indigenous people have lived without culturally appropriate positive coping resources.

Murray calls these historical prohibitions of culture and this loss of lifestyle, the “loss of emotional freedom.” She states that colonization prevented the Blackfoot, and other Indigenous people, from evolving emotionally. Prohibitions on Blackfoot people openly expressing emotions and grievances resulted in a loss of spiritual confidence. With heavy amounts of hurt in their personal systems and an inability to express emotions in a healthy manner to cope, the maladaptive colonized individual was born. Today Indigenous people do not know how to, or allow themselves the freedom to, feel but rather they adopt a false self, based on the perceptions of others who are too internally oppressed (C. Murray, personal communication, February, 2012). As well-being is connected to personal freedom and autonomy (Corey et al., 2007), the loss of personal freedom and increased internal conflict removes the individual away from well-being.

Intergenerational psychological and physical assaults, through Indigenous history, have integrated fear and oppression into Indigenous psyches. This complicates the processes for those helping this clientele. Murray describes such complication as “generational avoidance.” This is when historical trauma and its inter-generational transmission impact the individual through the removal of culture. The Indigenous

individual “misses out” on even knowing Indigenous goals; goals of spiritual harmonization that the culture provides. Living within this “trauma-based identity,” the Indigenous person fails to recognize opportunities for healing. This lack of healing then leads to a lack luster life or even living all together (C. Murray, personal communication, February, 2012); these ways of living are evident in the statistics that demonstrate poor quality of life for Indigenous people, including having the highest rates of suicide globally (Duran & Duran, 1995).

Pard describes this phenomenon as an increasing concern as he sees how our younger people are now not recognizing “public knowledge” of the Blackfoot people. Public knowledge can be understood as what is visible, for example in the tipi within a ceremony. Sacred knowledge is what is behind closed doors and amongst the sacred societal members. For example, if one has a significant dream, a part of public knowledge is that you go to a recognized elder to interpret dreams; one does not try to interpret significant dreams by themselves. As many young people are further removed from basic knowledge, the culture is at a losing advantage, for Pard explains that the culture cannot be without its people. *Apoomootsiiohp* is the transferring of knowledge, power, sacred rites, and authorities. Therefore, as vivid dreams provide warnings or predictions of the future, the Blackfoot custom is for one to seek interpretation from an elder. The warnings could be essential in directing a person’s life and choices, but they may be overlooked if the person receiving the dream does not understand the dream has this power and potential.

Within the Blackfoot knowledge systems, there is open public knowledge, as described above that is often practical and commonly known. On the other hand, there is

secured and sacred knowledge that only those initiated into the specific sacred societies will know of. To attain this sacred knowledge one must “progress” through various levels of teachings, similar to attaining a graduate degree; it does not happen overnight (A. Pard, personal communication, October, 2011).

Through coercive land displacement and relocation policies, Indigenous people have had their relationship with the natural environment altered and fragmented. This has significantly affected the Indigenous person’s identity (Alfred, 2009). Spiritual and interpersonal impacts continue as Indigenous peoples continue to be removed from their lands and land-based cultures. These land-based cultures have and do provide opportunities for optimal health. Further dislocation from their land poses further risks of annihilation of Indigenous people through the loss of their cultures (Alfred, 2005, 2009). These risks include: the interjection of foreign and misunderstood values and rituals, greater normalization of abuse of power, increased internalized hate and oppression, and mass assimilation of Indigenous people (Alfred, 2005; Battiste, 2000; Duran & Duran, 1995).

Blackwater stated that the Blackfoot people had no schools traditionally because “we lived our education.” The Blackfoot values were taught as primary education, and honesty was deemed most important. To be ostracized or isolated from the collective was the worst thing that could be done to the Blackfoot person. To recover from wrong doing one was to be hard on oneself to restore good relations (A. Blackwater, personal communication, March, 2012). To extend overt generosity and kindness would help those involved to move beyond the violation.

## **Culturally Blank**

*Cultural blanks* are what A. First Rider (personal communication, 2002) calls the loss of the cultural Indigenous self. An individual as a cultural blank does not adopt traditional worldview and values, therefore he or she does not believe in what the culture offers. This individual also does not believe in a mainstream religion. In essence, the culturally blank lives without, or with minimal, social boundaries. They behave in ways that are not conducive to maintaining harmony within a collective culture. These collective social boundaries and values—such as generosity, honesty, and so forth—contribute to developing an Indigenous psyche, including a collective ego. A. Pard believes people suffering from cultural blanks are those heaviest hit by colonialism. He states that life with traditional values will be a life that unfolds accordingly therefore life without these cultural values leads one's life into chaos. While a value is something that one treasures and holds in high regard, cultural blanks live with maladaptive values and lifestyles. (A. Pard, personal communication, October, 2011)

Pard uses the example of children: If children are valued then parents will not jeopardize their children's lives or bring negativity to them. He shares First Rider's sentiments about having proper values intact for favourable results thereafter. Values ensure that one acts according to the Blackfoot customs and ways of being (First Rider, personal communication, 2002); values exemplify the manner in which individuals carry themselves, states Blackwater. Blackwater, Pard (personal communication, October, 2011), and Murray additionally notes that confidence and self-care demonstrate self-love, therefore an ability to care for others. Pard concludes that love can therefore be articulated as *Atsimoiskaan*, or prayer.

A. Blackwater elaborates: The Blackfoot values are the driving forces in the Blackfoot way of life. For example, *Kiimapiipitsin*, refers to having compassion for, and consideration of one another, a foundational value that exemplifies the philosophy of cooperative collective living. *Kiimapiipitsin* teaches that everyone is to be considered in all decisions, and goals are achieved through consensus and cooperation. This consensus approach takes everyone into consideration when tribal decisions are made. Understanding *kiimapiipitsin* demonstrates how imperative values successfully form a Blackfoot person. Talking about traditional values creates a positive environment, which is conducive to learning well-being and harmony.

Non-interference prevents Blackfoot people from imposing traditional cultural interventions on the masses, as stated by Blackwater, Pard, and Murray in their interviews. Pard states that this Blackfoot custom of non-interference means that one does not preach or teach unless asked. Non-imposition allows individuals to motivate change within themselves first, for transformational positive change to occur. Personal motivation is essential for genuine internalization of the teachings and enlightenment; it is not Blackfoot custom to “push” the traditional way of life on anyone. Pard recognizes that non-interference is a downfall and impedes Blackfoot cultural survival, especially in today’s culturally confusing era. He understands he may often breach protocols by being more open in sharing his knowledge than some think he should, but he states that it is imperative to survive as Blackfoot people.

Murray shares Pard’s enthusiasm for breaching the non-interference protocol in order to promote cultural revitalization. She discusses how unfortunate it is that contemporary interpretation of Blackfoot protocol prevents more sharing of cultural

knowledge among the masses. She states that this non-interference “custom” may have been wrongfully interpreted by colonized Blackfoot people due to their unintentional adoption of oppressive behaviour. Murray recalls how historically, Blackfoot people were privileged to be born into a Blackfoot world full of prayer; there was simply no other reality. Today the reality is that Blackfoot people are born into colonization and its traumatic environments, and such a different existence calls for different approaches. Blackwater combats non-interference by sharing stories, a customary way of teaching. The sharing of knowledge is the storyteller’s responsibility, while interpretation of the story, and its implications for life, remains the listener’s responsibility.

*Anomie* is another term used to describe the state of affairs prevalent in Indigenous psyches (Alfred, 2009; Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 2003). This individual opts out of traditional Indigenous culture and rejects Euro-based westernized culture leaving them without healthy collective and social norms to regulate their behaviours and to guide their decision-making (First Rider, personal communication, 2002). Murray sees the effects of the loss of self-identity everyday in her work and in her community. Murray states that such loss, alongside losing someone or something that gave one purpose, creates a “hole” which needs to be filled one way or another.

Therefore, Murray challenges Blackfoot people to create purpose in their lives by praying for successfully healing others. Blackwater shared a similar belief. In his community, homeless people continuously bombard him, asking for “spare change.” Blackwater challenges these homeless people to pray aloud for him. The one with money shares and the one with prayer shares; both parties receive benefits. Many do not ask him

for his spare change again; the technique is short lived. However, he states that they could attain purpose and responsibility in that short time.

Emerging generations of people with cultural blanks mean increased social ills, gang involvement, criminal activity, promiscuity, and loss of self-respect, as well as heightened violence and an increase in sociopathic traits (Duran & Duran, 1995; Ross, 1992). Primary targets of these social ills are Indigenous youth who are absorbed into mainstream society; absorbed into the masses without understanding their origins of where they came from and this increases their maladaptive behaviours. Alfred (2005) describes this situation below:

These young people are fighting raging battles for their own survival everyday, and when they become convinced that to fight is futile and the battle likely to be lost, they retreat. Yet they have pride, and rather than submit to the enemy, they sacrifice themselves, sometimes using mercifully quick and sometimes painfully slow methods. (Alfred, 2005, p. 38)

Pard states that Indigenous cultures compete with mainstream cultures today. This competition leaves the survival of Blackfoot culture at a disadvantage due to the loss of Blackfoot cultural participation. Blackfoot mentorship is essential to continue practice of the culture and to ensure that the culture is practiced accurately. However, Blackfoot mentorship takes time and commitment, whereas the dominant society offers instant gratification and this presents further threats to Indigenous cultures. Pard says these “impacts” are residual effects of colonization that prevent young people from wanting to “be Indian” and ensure that if they do want to be “Indian,” they want it now. Participant A refers to this process as “fast tracking to the sacred”; this process will be elaborated on, later in the next chapter.



Eduardo and Bonnie Duran (1995) refer to this mammoth psychological and spiritual abrasion as a *soul wound*, reflecting why North American Indigenous people have the highest suicide rates globally (Duran & Duran, 1995). Battiste (2000) describes the internalization of cognitive imperialism as a cognitive restructuring process where the Indigenous mind denies its own knowledge and beliefs. This process denies people their languages and integrity, while legitimizing an adopted colonial reference point (Battiste, 2000). This results in Indigenous people blaming their race for their impoverished conditions and struggles, as well as for their depiction in the media. Tribal political leaders work within imposed colonial structures and utilize assimilative governmental policy (Alfred, 2005, 2009); thus, they have neither modeled the harmony, nor provided the leadership, necessary for the path towards healing these “soul wounds.”

Pard stresses that when whole communities do not understand their sickness, a proper diagnosis is challenging. He states that if communities understand their sickness, appropriate strategies of healing can be developed; otherwise, little can be done to reduce the overall impacts of cultural genocide.

Indigenous identity is a diverse and contentious issue amongst Indigenous people themselves (Alfred, 2005, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Colonial religions and practices have internally oppressed Indigenous groups and resulted in infighting. The greatest threat is that Indigenous people will be absorbed into mainstream culture through urbanization and cultural loss that reduces access to a collective foundation that meets Indigenous people’s unique needs (Alfred, 2009; Helin, 2006).

Language and identity are both imperative for Indigenous wellness but political interference prevents Indigenous and groups from attaining these basic imperatives, states

Murray. The international border has severed linguistic and familial ties amongst the Blackfoot tribes in both Canada and the United States. Murray sadly describes members of her tribe that seek to participate in the largest Blackfoot Sundance which is held in Canada on the Blood reserve. Numerous policies, on both sides of the border, deny entry into the other country (Assembly of First Nations, 2013), and diminish Blackfoot people's ability to engage with their families and spiritual practices, now and throughout their lifetimes.

In summary, the *cultural blank* is the most challenged of the colonized Indigenous people. This individual is without social norms and parameters that guide for a collective Indigenous existence. Within the collective, the Indigenous individual is provided with coping skills and ways of beings that are aligned with the cultural standards. Without a solid understanding of the cultural practices, an individual is susceptible to the influences outside of the collective culture and therefore at risk for increasingly complicated maladaptive behaviours such as the cultural blank. Aggressive attention needs to be given to this special population, to address the increasing negative effects it has in the cultural revitalization process.

### **Combating Cultural Confusion**

In Blackfoot, cultural confusion can be referred to as *mahtasistapii*, described as a “nothing thing”. In Pard’s interview, he used the word to describe the cultural confusion and the context he spoke of was when people make things up out of nothing. Pard states that in the “instant Indian” epidemic, where people are creating their own cultures, this creates cultural confusion and has negative impacts on Blackfoot people. As the Blackfoot culture originates from the Creator, and has been passed down through the

generation by *poomahksin*, or transfers, so have the values and worldview (A. Pard, personal communication, October, 2011). The increasing threat of cultural blanks or “instant Indianness” is troublesome for elders like Pard. He speaks of traditional elders like him who work diligently to ensure that the spiritual rituals remain unaltered from the original form in which they were received. Pard stresses that mentorship in the Blackfoot learning is important and lifelong. He further states that there are not as many people who have deep understanding of Blackfoot spirituality as there once was, but there are many people who have surface understanding of the spirituality. Many will not admit that their knowledge is superficial, he continues, and will often make up things. All participants noted that it is those who actually live the lifestyle who have the greatest understanding of the Blackfoot culture. The sacrifices of the lifestyle are many; they include: exemplifying ethical and culturally appropriate behaviours, staying out of controversies within the communities, ensuring availability for around-the-clock supports for community members, enduring financial strains, sacrificing personal time and energy. The sacrifices can strain the family. The sacrifices are not limited to what is listed above.

Pard describes how Blackfoot prayer is central to Blackfoot identity, as prayer and spirituality are not segregated from any part of life, but included in everything. Participant A adds, that one must live this reality in their thoughts, words, and action, and this is even more true for the members of the sacred societies. Pard states that Indigenous people have features specific to their tribe, and that distinguish their tribe from others. For example, Blackfoot ceremonies are distinctively different from say Lakota or Cree ceremonies. Paints, regalia, songs, and dances are unique to a specific tribe as is the language. Pard states that how people pray in Blackfoot ceremonies signals which society

they belong to. He elaborates that the more involved one becomes in Blackfoot ceremony, the more one can notice the differences between the prayers and ceremonies associated with each bundle.

Indigenous people are experiencing an identity crisis and the social problems relate to this, states Blackwater and elaborates that when people do not know who they are, or what they have to do, they then create their own understandings or misunderstandings. These maladaptive coping skills fracture the healing of the communities and families. Every tribe has their own approach to dealing with an identity crisis and while there is always respect for, and room to practice, other cultures, they cannot be taught in Blackfoot schools, explains Blackwater. The school must practice Orthodox Blackfoot ways and he simply states, “This is how we deal with the identity crisis.” There is much amalgamation of Indigenous practices that then are taught in cultural classes. When the practices, rituals, or history is taught, amalgamating it all creates for more cultural confusion. The practices of “when in Rome, do as the Romans do” is no different for Indigenous territories. Blackfoot people in Blackfoot territory, inclusive of the municipalities around First Nation communities, should respect the territory in which it resides in. Therefore, in Blackfoot country, Blackfoot worldview and teachings are a must.

### **Restructuring Blackfoot Identity**

In an effort to identify and understand how to “deal with the identity crisis,” all participants described a specific Blackfoot school of thought. The following describes some, but not all, central aspects of Blackfoot development. This section provides

practical understanding and applications of Blackfoot protocols and constructs for recovery of the Blackfoot identity from Blackfoot people.

### **Blackfoot Names**

Pard's October, 2011 interview elaborates on the convention of Blackfoot names. Pard anticipates that there will be a day in one's formative years that require a Blackfoot person to have a Blackfoot name if they do not have one, especially when they join one of the Blackfoot sacred societies. A Blackfoot name signifies an induction into the Blackfoot world, so those praying can call upon the universal entities to see and help this person. The naming process is a public act where the people witness the newly named individual being physically pushed into their new world alone. The individual transferring the name announces aloud the new name so all spiritual forces and beings can see who this person now is and hear their name so they can be identified spiritually.

Pard suspects that approximately thirty percent of today's Blackfoot people may have names, whereas in his generation about ninety percent had names. Pard says colonialism, residential schools, and mainstream interference disrupted this sacred process of giving names.

Participant A remembers witnessing Blackfoot ceremony as a child. There, she saw how prayer and identity merged when those praying called upon the spirits to come and help. In the ceremony, when one's Blackfoot name is called out, you take the blessing is taken into the heart with a physical gesture of placing your hand on your heart, to "take the spirit in." She reiterates that a ceremonialist asks for one's Blackfoot name so the prayers can be specific to that individual.

## Gender and Identity

Three of the four interviewed Elders commented on gender differences. Their interviews illustrated the Blackfoot culture as highly structured and organized, with gender differences reflecting particular protocols and customs. Pard's interview describes Blackfoot learning as being gender specific. Females mentor females; males mentor males. Usually the mentorship involved the immediate family, Pard explains, giving the example that protocols about how to become a Blackfoot woman, were taught by immediate family members. Murray states that women have a key role in Blackfoot society; therefore the primary task of women is to take care of their own needs, as well as those of others. Murray affirms that ceremony and prayer increase confidence and exercise greater well-being. In prayer, Murray describes a process she ascribes to that engages the universal female energy. As stated earlier, the Sun, Moon, and Morning Star are the entities that Blackfoot people pray to. Murray often specifies in her prayers to connect specifically with the female energy, *Kookoomokiisom Kipitakii*, Old Lady Moon. By praying to this female entity, Murray seeks help from the one who knows what she needs as a woman.

Murray is confident about the decolonization of and for Blackfoot women. She now hears Blackfoot men speak more openly about how important the role of the Blackfoot woman is in the ceremonies. Blackfoot men acknowledge and understand the importance of the Blackfoot woman's responsibility for prayer to maintain overall wellness.

Murray recalls the stories of *Napi* and how women pitied the men in the original creations stories. As women are life-giving entities who cleanse monthly, through

menstruation, men are seen as pitiful as they cannot. The spirits thus pitied men and granted them ways to cleanse through the sweat lodge, the pipe, and other ceremonial engagements. Although Murray stresses that you cannot do any ceremony without the Blackfoot woman, she also states, “We (as Blackfoot people) are only as good as our women, we are only as good as our men,” demonstrating the reciprocal purpose of each gender.

Participant A shares that there is a feminine side to every Blackfoot ceremony, where women have definitive roles as do the men. As the bundles are transferred to the women, the women are the keepers of the bundle, while men are the women’s workers. Men work to activate those bundles at the ceremonies, and this is why at first glance, it appears as if the males are more active than the women in a Blackfoot ceremony (Participant A, personal communication, October, 2013).

Pard describes Blackfoot women as naturally gifted and blessed for merely being a woman. Males must engage in rituals to elevate themselves to the place of females. Blackfoot women merely follow customary protocols and live positively in accordance to the Blackfoot culture. Female mentorship is the pathway to learning the protocols. To simply pray, Blackfoot women focus and concentrate on what they seek to change, and their prayers will be heard and answered.

The Blackfoot males have the options to transform continuously throughout their lives. Name changes and rites of passages are examples of this. When a male reaches puberty, he undertakes a vision quest to find his spiritual protection and to become a good provider and protector, as explained by Pard. He feels this process is still relevant due to the high rates of cultural confusion that have impacted the Blackfoot people’s

livelihoods. Upon completion of the quest, a young man will have clarity about their role, obligations, and responsibilities in life. Hopefully, this will reduce the impacts of the social ills that young men are involved with. As an adult, a man can take on another name and with it more adult responsibilities. At this point in his life, he will decide how deep his spiritual development and commitments will be.

Pard describes how the process of Blackfoot naming relates to gender. The naming process is unique to the Blackfoot male as he can alter his destiny if he needs to. The male can take on the name of a person of achievement or a successful relative from the past. The women are inherently gifted and blessed, he says, therefore, there is no need to change their names. "Men are the misfits who need guidance," he says explicitly. However these culturally specific, gender differentiations may be difficult for a colonized male to accept, because they have internalized the patriarchal and male domination learned through colonization (Duran & Duran, 1995) that has complicated male recovery (Duran, 2006). The participants believed that young people had little or no other option than to return to their Indigenous roots for culturally appropriate ways of healing and wellness, for both males and females.

### **Lifelong Learning**

Pard states that learning is lifelong; this includes understanding the Blackfoot prayers. One must learn to appreciate the entire system of knowledge that includes references to their Blackfoot roles. Starting at birth, the Blackfoot child rearing is permissive, according to Pard, and children are raised communally. Request for child-rearing skills permeate the prayers, as this is a priority for the Blackfoot, states Pard.



Blackwater says, *Ahksipatopiisin* is the prayer for an environment of harmony and well-being conducive to raising children.

*Napi* and other creation stories teach children morals and through this oral process Blackfoot thinking and identity are identified early in life, states Pard. Blackwater talks about how children explore things on their own, how they learn right from wrong and how their actions can result in either negative or positive consequences.

As children belong to the Blackfoot people as a collective, they are valued as gifts from Creator and to be treated as such. The collective responsibility to care for the children obligates everyone to say how they should be raised, states Blackwater. This obligation ensures that children are treated fairly. Blackfoot children need to know that all of the elders are their grandparents through custom adoption. Traditionally when a family may have lost a child, another family would have offered one of their children to fill the loss. Blackwater emphasizes that this is a reciprocal process, when a parent adopts a child, the child also adopts the parent. No permission is needed for these traditional adoptions, but rather such issues are prayed upon to attain blessings or guidance (A. Blackwater, personal communication, March, 2012).

Children are allowed to discover things, to a point, while not being disciplined for every little thing states Blackwater. Blackwater expresses pain over customs from the mainstream culture's childrearing, which he sees as highly abusive. He has witnessed white parents overly discipline their children. He says that children cannot be expected to be good when they get older with such influences because excessive discipline does not teach responsibility for one's own behaviour, or self-regulation.

Blackfoot people pray that their children are able to meet the challenges of what life presents and to make their situations better even the situation seems futile or overwhelming (A. Blackwater, personal communication, March, 2012). Nowadays, education is referred to in the prayers; request are made that, students are able to overcome the challenges they meet in attaining an education and to not see barriers. The Blackfoot elders like Blackwater recognize that there is a need for increased education rates so “We don’t get left behind” as stated by Blackwater. These prayers assist children and youth to build their skills and strength, instead of becoming weak people (A. Blackwater, personal communication, March, 2012).

Finally, Blackwater states that a chick has only one chance to stand on the edge of the nest to take flight, otherwise it will fall to the ground. Blackwater describes the prayers petition for how Blackfoot people’s homes to be like these nests, so children can take flight into the world. Adequate preparation and nurturing at home early in life encourages the children to leave home as adults and to take their natural place in the world. When the children flew out of the residential schools, says Blackwater, they dropped to the ground and that is why they are all injured.

To reach old age is a virtue and this is what Pard reiterates. Pard states that the Blackfoot elders are blessed with knowledge and their wisdom is priceless, which is why they are held in such high regard. When one does a good deed for an elder, the gift returned to the individual is a blessing from the elder for a long happy life, the ultimate blessing. Old age is coveted by Blackfoot people and request for a long life can be heard in the prayers (A. Pard, personal communication, October, 2011).

## **Kinship**

The importance of kinship, relationships, and social engagement are significant in the healthy development of a Blackfoot identity. *Issopatohpiiiohp apo pomotohkinaan* heard in prayers means “Creator chooses our path,” states Pard. This phrase points to how life unfolds accordingly if one is on the ‘right’ path. Kinship provides a support system for Blackfoot people to get on, and to maintain, this right path. One learns the Blackfoot culture and spirituality through spiritual apprenticeship; however, it is frowned upon for close relatives to apprentice one another as they may be lenient with their own relatives and “take short cuts,” states Pard.

*Poomahksin* is the transfer of rites and how one attains spiritual authority in the process of Blackfoot apprenticeship. This process “teaches nothing but love” according to Pard. Through *poomahksin* a person can be a child, grandparent, and parent all at the same time through various spiritual relationships in the apprenticeship. To hold a bundle you become a child of that particular bundle, and when that bundle is transferred to another you become the parent of that particular bundle and the holders. When “your” children transfer that same bundle then you become a spiritual grandparent (Chambers & Blood, 2009). It is the individual’s responsibility to understand their role and responsibilities about how to be in such relationships. Not only does the spiritual apprenticing shape the relationships between sacred society members, it also facilitates learning about relationships, more generally, and how to apply this in one’s life. To take a complete stranger and immediately transform that person into a spiritual brother or sister, teaches love and compassion, as discussed by Pard and Blackwater. “Our ways teach us how to love one another,” states Pard. Not only do these individuals become your kin, but

their children also become your children, states Blackwater. These ways of loving and forms of compassion model relationship skills, which were fractured through the trauma of residential schools.

This process teaches the value of compassion, that people must take care of one another. Blackwater explains that the process also teaches individuals to be independent, to take responsibility for helping themselves. This spiritual mentorship in the societies is life-long and ideally begins at an early age. This way, those being mentored can bond with the elders of their particular age-graded society. This process develops support systems. Blackwater states that today, community food-banks, social services, and other social agencies in Indigenous communities fill the void of the original kinship support systems, which were broken down through colonization. He explains that the apprenticeship always aims for progress to the next level of learning. The goal is for no one to be left behind and for each person to learn to help one another. This model for wellness is in contrast to the reliance on social agencies, which creates a system of dependency.

Within the Blackfoot ceremonies and prayers, people acknowledge those who transferred them rites, alongside praying for the children and for those present. At this time, people can be identified in the ceremony; Participant A explains that they “take the prayer into one’s heart,” bringing the hand to one’s heart. This identifies societal members to everybody present, so all can then greet and approach these members with proper protocol.

As the society members are conduits for the bundle, they connect and bring the spirits into the ceremony to help. Once in motion, those present at the ceremony are

expected to support those societal members, by praying for what they are praying for, says Participant A. Even if what is being prayed for is unclear, the prayers are valuable.

Pard believes that there is recourse for those who have not followed Blackfoot traditions all their lives. When a person is born, their umbilical cord is sewn into a bag, a lizard design for a boy and another animal for a girl. This “amulet” is always kept so the spirit does not go astray. If the spirit goes astray then a life becomes unbalanced and chaotic. He stated that Blackfoot people now throw these cords into the garbage, and consequently people treat themselves and their spirit in the same way, throwing their lives away. For those who had not kept the umbilical cord, he stated the only recourse is to do one’s best to maintain protocol and to work to become a “good Blackfoot citizen.” This sums up the purpose and intention of prayer, by providing some general “ingredients for life” to become a “good Blackfoot citizen.”

## **Chapter 7: *Aistomatoom*, The Indigenous Paradigm**

National and international Indigenous movements require a common method of communicating the constructs of ITK so Indigenous people can construct and share means of decolonization. The Indigenous Paradigm offers Indigenous movements a common language to communicate the constructs of ITK.

### **Understanding the Indigenous Paradigm through Values**

In contemporary post-colonial times, Native American people have been forced to participate in the western society around them (Duran & Duran, 1995). Since the onset of colonialism, their psychological development has been impaired by a systematic destruction of their original value systems and a dichotomy between euro-western and

traditional, Indigenous value systems. Integrating Indigenous values into therapy will increase recovery successes.

Indigenous ethics are derived from the active relationship human beings have with the natural world. Humans observed the profound forces of the universe, which created deep respect and reverence (Knudston & Suzuki, 1992). Indigenous people learned respect through their non-interference protocol from the universal relationships. Mysteries of the universe were accepted and not challenged (Ross, 1992).

The Indigenous worldview consists of but is not limited to sharing and cooperation, extended family, noninterference, harmony with nature, an orientation toward the present, a preference for explaining natural phenomena with the supernatural, and a deep respect for elders (Garrett & Garrett, 1994; Lokken & Twohey, 2004).

By contrast, mainstream worldview and values emphasize saving and competition, individualism and the nuclear family, domination, mastery over nature, orientation toward the future, a preference for scientific explanations, and reverence for youth (Garrett and Garrett, 1994). Indigenous people are faced with the problem of either internalizing unfamiliar values of the dominant society, or practicing traditional Indigenous values and maintaining one's culture (Garrett & Garrett, 1994). Successful harmonization for the Indigenous person requires a balance of both worlds lived in.

## **Values**

Values provide organizing principles for individuals and groups (First Rider, 1994). Corey et al. (2007) define values as beliefs and attitudes that provide direction for everyday living. Those who accept a value system are rewarded with group membership as well as honour, prestige, and respect; then wellness and balance are achieved.

Indigenous traditional values generally include but are not limited to generosity, kindness, honesty, and strength (First Rider, 1994; Ross, 1992).

*Generosity* strengthens the collective well-being through sharing and cooperation. Blackfoot leaders were chosen based on their proven war record and their generosity. This “natural leadership” demonstrated the virtues and ethics necessary for successful leadership and is still applicable today (A. Pard, personal communication, October, 2011). Generosity ensured the survival of the group because as they practiced generosity, individuals learned responsibility for others (First Rider, 1994).

*Kindness* promoted peaceful resolutions necessary for social order and harmonious relations. Kindness had to permeate the group’s thoughts, words, and actions to stimulate cooperation, thus social order (First Rider, 1994). Recognition of good deeds increases group morale and reduces potential conflict (First Rider, 1994).

*Honesty* was depended on for oral Indigenous cultures. Dishonesty could lead the people into chaos if a member of the group lied about work they did, for example; the consequences could be disastrous. An individual deemed as a liar was isolated and lost coveted respect. The individual was shamed in the clan as well as he or she shamed his or her clan. To be an honest individual was to be an individual of integrity and that earned the most respect amongst Indigenous people. Individuals thus developed a highly internalized conscience (First Rider, 1994). For the culture to continue, historical and cultural accuracy in Blackfoot practices was necessary. Honesty was necessary to transfer collective knowledge successfully and accurately especially in an oral tradition. Accuracy was ensured through continual “witnessing” practices of public transfers.

When an individual was strong, their collective contribution was strong. *Strength* of character exemplified self-mastery and discipline (First Rider, 1994). This was integral for the ethical development of individuals. Peace and harmony could be achieved with an ethical framework in place for the individual and the group. These virtues ensured well-being through faith, belief, and the security of individuals and others.

These traditional Indigenous values were essential components for the cognitive structuring for the Indigenous psyche. Establishment of the Indigenous paradigm as a descriptive, interpretive tool evolved through a synthesis of such values as articulated in the literature, in the conceptualizations of Indigenous scholars who work directly with Indigenous peoples and communities, and at Indigenous gatherings.

### **The Indigenous Paradigm**

Blackfoot scholar, Dr. Leroy Little Bear (personal communication, 2001) developed the Indigenous Paradigm as a way to describe a shared perspective of Indigenous ways of living. The paradigm provides a framework of ancient Indigenous philosophies and values. The paradigm reflects the “traditional mind” which depicts the interrelationships amongst oneself, others, and the universe (Wilson, 2008). Spirituality is a primary construct of Indigenous life; therefore, it infuses the paradigm. Blackfoot prayer is a living demonstration of the Indigenous Paradigm; conversely, the key elements of the paradigm are demonstrated in the prayers.

A paradigm is largely unconscious and is primarily embodied in the tacit infrastructures<sup>8</sup> of the people; the tacit infrastructures are so embodied that most never

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<sup>8</sup> Tacit infrastructures refer to all mental, social, philosophical, political, etc. foundations of one’s belief systems that influence behaviours and decisions (First Rider, 1994).



reflect or question them (First Rider, personal communication, 2002). The specific and local prayers are indicative of and connected to a much more general Indigenous framework, not simply specific to the Blackfoot. The Indigenous Paradigm lays down the conditions for wellness. If the Indigenous Paradigm is enacted, then wellness will follow. Below are five key concepts of the Indigenous Paradigm, which clarifies the relationship between Blackfoot prayer and wellness: constant flux, existence as energy waves, interrelationships, renewal, and land as reference.

***Akwatapiio*: Constant Flux**

Constant flux means that the world is subject to constant change and this presents challenges for Indigenous people. The challenge is that the universe provides constant unpredictable dueling forces, and nothing is constant (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000). These forces give rise to all energies, including the spiritual forces at work in Blackfoot spirituality, everything arises from everything else (First Rider, 1994). When change occurs, it ripples amongst all entities to create new aspects to the universe. The seasons exemplify the idea of the world in constant flux, as seasons are constantly evolving and changing (First Rider, 1994). Unpredictable and harsh physical environments shaped resiliency for Indigenous people. Today the environment is harsh due to colonial impacts and behaviours.

*Akwatapiio* refers to the “mixing” where the transformation can occur, and this describes the constant flux. Little Bear (personal communication, May, 2013) states that the flux is an opportunity to *deform*, *reform*, and *transform*. Blackwater repeatedly spoke of how people have the ability and authority to manifest life change using prayer.

Therefore, the flux lives within each Blackfoot/Indigenous person and gives each person the potential for transformation.

Previously in the chapter on colonization, Youngblood Henderson depicted colonization as the anti-trickster, which serves to stop the flux. *Stagnancy*, the opposite of flux, keeps colonialism in place, and continues to extinguish the Indigenous being (Youngblood Henderson, 2000). Government income support programs for Indigenous people create dependency. Through this stagnancy, the flux is interrupted. By way of contrast, constant flux manifests *resiliency*, *adaptability*, and *survival*.

### ***Api*: Energy Waves**

Spirit is energy. Each living thing is imbued with spirit, and each has the ability to communicate with the rest of the world through its spirit (Cajete, 1999). Little Bear (2005) describes combinations of atmospheric energy waves that allow humans to continue their existence, which was as born out of the flux. If these waves dissolve, then so does the existence of Indigenous people.

Renewal through ritual and ceremony sustain the energy waves. “We sing the same songs; we tell the same stories; we do the same ceremonies,” states Little Bear (personal communication, May, 2013). He explains that continuous repetition of these rituals and ceremonies provides the renewal necessary for continued Blackfoot existence. Blackfoot elders explain that ceremony gives Indigenous people the ability to communicate with the animate world and to shift energies in their favour. Willy Ermine (W. Ermine, personal communication, April, 2010) explains that such engagement with ceremony and prayer transforms energy waves. Ermine, who is Cree, translates *health* from Cree to English as “moving particles.” In this definition, health is equivalent to

vibrant energy. When energy is low or a person sick, a ceremony with songs, rattles, drums, or other means will increase the energy and manifest good health for that individual (W. Ermine, personal communication, April, 2010). This process illustrates the remarkable effects of accessing spiritual energy through participation in ceremony (Cajete, 1999).

The literal translation of *apiio* is a “connector” or rope, which connects something to something else (L. Little Bear, personal communication, May, 2013). In a contemporary time, the question, *Tsanistapii*, asks someone how they are doing. But the literal Blackfoot translation is *How are you connected?* These examples show the inter-relationships among energy fields. Ermine might ask, “How are your energy connections?”

### ***Tsookowakapii*: Interrelatedness**

*Niiksookowaa* (Blackfoot) or *Mitakuye Oyasin* (Lakota) translates as “We are all related.” Prayer invites animate beings and ancestors to come join the people (Cajete, 1999). *Tsookowakapii* refers to being related through physical touch or *api*, an energy. Ceremony forms inter-relationships between all energy forces.

No hierarchies exist between human beings and the natural world in an Indigenous paradigm. There is equality amongst all of creation (Little Bear, 2005). This construct of the paradigm fosters responsibility to care for all living things in which one lives amongst (Cajete, 1999). Kinship is developed to ensure that people live modestly in the world while appreciating the universal gifts that enhance life (Cajete, 1999). Indigenous identity arises from a kinship with the land, in which the land and people care for one another, thus are interrelated with one another.

Tim Ingold (Wheeler, Ziman, & Boden, 2002) discusses a “relational model” in his scientific analysis of people and their relationship within their environment. Ingold states that people evolve and shape their realities through their involvement within the specific social and environmental interactions. In respect to the changing identities of a person within their environment, people are always “perpetually going” and evolving as life is not contained in a particular individual but regenerating continuously due to involvement in all-encompassing fields of relationships. Therefore, “ways of life” are conceived as “negotiations along the path through the world.” In actualizing Blackfoot ways of being, the surrounding relationships will continually imprint upon that person’s development.

Spiritually, the individual is interdependent with language, rituals, ancestors, and land (Cajete, 1999). One cannot have one without the other. For example, healing ceremonies follow particular steps to attain the desired outcomes, and the potential healing power of the plants and medicines cannot be activated, without the appropriate songs and rituals (Battiste, 2000; Cajete, 1999).

Interrelationships amongst the various aspects of the self are explained by the Lakota medicine wheel (Cajete, 1999) which synthesizes the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual parts to reach a harmonized self (Duran & Duran, 1995). A change in one aspect affects the whole (Wilson, 2008). Therapeutically, collective minded Indigenous people remain upset if their socio-political, environmental, and spiritual realms conflict with one another. Systematically, everything is connected (Wilson, 2008), and therefore, healthy relationships cannot flourish in unhealthy environments.

In the chapter on colonization above, group trauma and HTT were identified as cumulative emotional and psychological wounds (Adelson, 2009; Yellowhorse-Braveheart, 2003). These wounds impact the entire person, and their world, as they are systemically interrelated. Blackfoot elders identified healthy relationships, such as the supportive kinship in cultural apprenticeship, as essential for optimal health. Through healthy relationships, people develop the necessary skills to manifest a positive environment in their community, family, and life.

### ***Aitahk Tsis Too Sispah: Renewal***

Blackfoot existence continued because of *ceremony*. Through ceremony, the people were able to find regular patterns in a harsh and unpredictable natural world. Little Bear (personal communication, 2001; Little Bear 2005) states that to renew stories, rituals, and songs, is to affirm existence. Stories remind Indigenous people of their important history and renew social norms, boundaries, consequences, and celebrations. “We tell the same stories, sing the same songs, and do the same ceremonies to maintain the same patterns of existence” (L. Little Bear, personal communication, May, 2013).

*Renewal* ensures that a universal relationship continues to provide for harmonious existence (Cajete, 1999; First Rider, personal communication, 2002; Little Bear, 2005; Wilson, 2008). This sacred kinship between humans and nature is renewed through annual or seasonal celebrations and ceremonies that honour and acknowledge the medicines, resources, and knowledge granted to the people from the environment (Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992). A daily sunrise or the disappearance of the constellation, Pilates in the spring and its reappearance in the fall are indicators of a continued existence; it is in such ways that the universe communicates to Indigenous people, and

that it provides order amongst the flux. This communication ensures that Indigenous people developed adaptability and resiliency, whereas colonization would have otherwise exterminated them.

Females embody renewal through menstruation, a monthly cycle that detoxifies and cleanses (Duran & Duran, 1995). Whereas ceremonies such as the sweat lodge, do the same for males (A. Pard, personal communication, October, 2011). The construct of renewal reaffirms existence for Indigenous people within the natural world and their interpersonal worlds.

### ***Tsako*: Space as Reference**

“I’m touching the earth; I’m making a connection” is the translation that Little Bear provides to interpret *Tsako*, the land (personal communication, May, 2013). Indigenous thought is comprised of spatial rather temporal referents: what matters in history or in the world is *where* an event took place rather than *when* it took place (Cajete, 1999; Duran & Duran, 1995; Knudston & Suzuki, 1992; L. Little Bear, personal communication, 2001). There may have been significant periods in Blackfoot history, for example, but the location of where it took place was more important to identify. Indigenous Paradigm learn and accumulate knowledge through an active and intimate relationship with the environment, experiences which are processed through multiple realities (Cajete, 1999; Duran & Duran, 1995); consciousness arises from its connection to the land (Cajete, 1999). The multiple realities include the physical, spiritual, and emotional realms.

Alfred (2009) states that land-based cultures shape Indigenous identity through spirituality. Blackfoot spirituality is directly attached to Blackfoot territory (A.

Blackwater, personal communication, March, 2012; First Rider, 1994; L. Little Bear, personal communication, 2001; C. Murray, personal communication, February, 2012; A. Pard, personal communication, October, 2011), described the inter-relationships among with the Blackfoot sky, land, and water beings. The Sun, Moon, and Morning Star are primary beings in Blackfoot prayer that the Blackfoot people identify with. Backwater discussed how these beings and the land created the classroom for Blackfoot and Indigenous people, for holistic and practical living and learning.

The Indigenous Paradigm encapsulates and communicates the spiritual, cultural, and environmental experiences and knowledge of Indigenous peoples. In summary, the Indigenous Paradigm synthesizes the cognitive framework of Indigenous people. While the paradigm is broadly applicable, it does not take away from the uniqueness of each tribe in Indian Country.

### **Blackfoot Prayers as the Indigenous Paradigm**

*Istopatopiiohp*, the source of life, is not external to humans, but rather within them. The Blackfoot elders participating in this study reiterated how decolonization is available to those seeks it. The resources necessary for decolonization are present within the Blackfoot world: prayer and ceremony. The elders explained that people get caught in the polarity of good and bad fortune, but misfortune can be altered at anytime. This encourages individuals to change, and to use prayers and ceremonies as conduits for that change. Transformational change is a form of decolonization. Without transformation, colonization will consume Indigenous people.

The study of Blackfoot sacred narratives encompasses a comprehensive education for the Blackfoot person (Cajete, 1999). These narratives demonstrate well-being. Crane

Bear (T. Crane Bear, personal communication, April, 2009) stated that this well-being is “influenced from the heavens”.

*Atsimoiskaan* is commonly translated as “prayer,” however, the deeper meaning is “We are trying to build a relationship around and with those of creation, with all of my relations. If we are in relation with those beings, we are trying to get them to do us a favour with their powers” (L. Little Bear, personal communication, May, 2013). The favour is to shift energies to the positive.

The prayers are sacred narratives that encompass the totality of education for Indigenous people. This thesis offers an authentic Indigenous model of well-being embodied in the Blackfoot experience of prayer. Prayer holds the components of the Indigenous Paradigm from a Blackfoot perspective, and when the prayer is activated in practical application in life, this provides an Indigenous wellness framework.

The following is a prayer translated into English by Allan Pard (A. Pard, personal communication, October 2013):

*Hokay* Hey: the old version of saying *Oki*, greeting the beings  
Old Man Sun, the source of life,  
The holy beings are called upon to hear my wishes that I pray for  
I’m praying for my relatives, for my people  
I’m praying that our lives be good and that we have help towards the young  
people, the children, the sick people  
We pray for the seasonal changes, and that we are coming to this winter and we  
have a happy winter and we successfully make it into the spring  
That our lives somehow become better  
I pray for self fulfillment  
That we have capabilities to escape danger, sickness, and death  
And that we reach old age



## Chapter 8: Discussion

The goal of this thesis was to understand if and how Blackfoot prayer embodied wellness, and if it provided resources, that Indigenous people could draw upon personally and/or professionally. While many Indigenous people had overcome severe circumstances, and had survived through generations of trauma, there was something to be paid attention to in regards to their resiliency and survival. My job was to understand if Blackfoot spirituality was a component of this survival, resiliency, and healing.

I interviewed four traditional Blackfoot elders, two males and two females. The interviews provided in-depth knowledge about prayer that helped me to understand that a wealth of resources resided in within as individuals. They agreed that prayer is here to assist human beings to engage with spiritual beings. Blackfoot knowledge is separated into public knowledge, common knowledge, and knowledge acquired through ceremonial transfer. For the purpose of this research, there was much the Elders could share about prayer generally.

The results of how Blackfoot prayer encompasses wellness, based on the interviews, included but were not limited to: 1) cultural kinship, 2) learning and restoring love within ourselves and in our relationships, 3) personal spiritual power, 4) transformational energies and processes, 5) personal responsibilities, and that 6) prayers do provide life instructions, or at least parameters understood as a paradigm, to guide us to learning and living a meaningful life.

Cultural kinship was identified by the elders as a means of support and aids the path of recovery. While relationships within Indigenous families have been fractured, cultural kinships, such as spiritual apprenticing, provide a means of learning, loving, and

healthy relations with custom adopted families. This kinship process provides opportunities for Indigenous people to learn what was absent in their upbringing or to re-learn more positive ways of being with others.

Love of self and others was a fundamental construct that was in relation to the kinship discussion, but it highlighted areas of self-care and love. These aspects are challenging in the shame and internalized oppression and violence that Indigenous people have experienced. It is imperative that Indigenous people see themselves as positive beings rather than negative stigmas and stereotypes that the mainstream society perpetuates.

Personal spiritual power was discussed by the elders as a means of engaging personal autonomy. The ability to heal one's self is evident in the interviews. This notion describes a process of finding personal will power and motivation to change one's life at any time or within any situation.

Transformational energies were described by the elders as the spiritual core of healing. Ritual, ceremony, and prayer are conduits to transformation for Indigenous people. The goal is to engage in these Indigenous practices and that can be an obstacle in itself for those such as cultural blanks. The healing is present when one decides to engage, whereas the challenge is to open people's minds and hearts to participate in the cultural experiences.

Personal responsibility was identified as an important concept in which people have to accept their responsibilities in their lives regardless of external forces such as the governmental policies and so forth. This is challenging because the "victim mentality" has a hold on colonized individuals. The elders stated that life will offer no positive

outcomes within that mindset and personal responsibility will open a variety of healing opportunities for the individual and their families.

Instructions for living were evident in the prayers themselves as they provided it the foundational constructs that Blackfoot people can identify with to start understanding their core identity. The prayers also identify how people can reference the prayers to find processes to guide their lives when needed. This is an important concept for dealing with the “hardest hit by colonialism” such as the cultural blanks and the youth.

Interviewed Elders helped me to understand that Blackfoot prayer includes universal beings. Without understanding the larger picture of where those prayers were developed, prayer is without meaning. These prayers include expressions and reminders of gratitude for nature’s gifts. Prayers provide the means to focus our energies to manifest transformational change, whether small or significant. There are differences in prayer that can begin with personal conversations with the life forces of the world, to making a Vow that will provide significant supports and a process of life transformation as it changes the life one will lead. Prayers provide an opportunity for human beings to ask for support from a source exceeding human influence. Prayers provide spiritual conversations that help us as humans engage with the spirit world to seek guidance when life becomes overwhelming. Prayer is constant and always giving, and will always be present to engage with. Prayer provided me with a comfort that it is always available, at many levels for life’s severities, and will provide what is needed, not always what is wanted.

I cannot define what Blackfoot prayer is definitely because it is vast, fluid, and constantly changing to accommodate varying requests. While the Blackfoot prayers are ever evolving, there are constants including constants such as praying for compassion and

a long life. The modes for wellness are continuously being reiterated in the prayers, as well as the beings that the Blackfoot people identify with, such as the Sun, Moon, and Morning Star. I can confidently say that it is powerful and transformational as it provides miracles and sustenance for people like the Blackfoot, who should not be here, in this day and age, after the atrocities they have faced.

### **Counsellor Recommendations**

Approximately 1.3 million or 4% of Canada's inhabitants identify themselves as Indigenous (Helin, 2006). Given the small number of trained Indigenous therapists in Canada, the simple fact is it is that most Indigenous clients will see a non-Indigenous counsellor. As these counsellors will have Indigenous clients on their caseload, they must be prepared to deal with them (Brucker & Perry, 1998). Counsellors need general knowledge about, and sensitivity to, Indigenous culture and history, as well as specific knowledge of the particular cultural background of each client, to be able to work effectively with Indigenous people.

The traditional Elders in this study expressed the need for culturally responsive counselling that includes therapists who share ideals, experiences, and ethics with the Indigenous client. The client needs to identify with the therapist to transcend any multi-cultural barriers that may exist between them. The Elders also stated that therapists would do well to serve as respectful agents of support by brokering, or referring clients to, culturally appropriate resources. The therapist therefore, would not act alone with the Indigenous client but rather they would incorporate spiritual interventions and referrals into their practice. Such an approach would encourage the client to foster a relationship with the Creator or Great Spirit, or whatever spiritual being they choose, but without

attaching themselves to the counsellor. The client can transform, laying down a path towards personal responsibility, and away from dependency.

The Elders expressed that healing is embedded in positive relationships with family and community; they stressed the significance of restoring harmony to the relationships. These relationships will, in turn, provide Indigenous people with social and emotional support. While the healing of the relationships may not always be possible, the relationships that one forms in the spiritual community, such as a spiritual apprenticeship, will compensate and sustain the individual in the face of irreparable harm of past relationships. The relationships formed within respectful spiritual encounters, such as when seeking prayer, advice, or guidance from an elder, help clients succeed in combating addictions and recovering from life inside institutions. These are some of the considerations for counsellors based on interviews with the Elders.

### **Ethics**

As I progressed through this research, it was increasingly apparent that the spiritual realms of the Blackfoot offered an ethical framework for both research and clinical practice. The ethics govern traditional elders, and ensure that they remain accountable as the spiritual conduits. Pard (A. Pard, personal communication, October, 2011) referred to the strict protocols of the Blackfoot societal protocols as “the laws that govern the Blackfoot.” These laws can be interpreted as social boundaries that members should not cross to ensure that positive social relationships are sustained. Such boundaries, therefore, create and maintain culturally appropriate behaviours, which is wellness. This thesis sought to understand how to construct and maintain wellness through the embodiment of prayers. Culturally appropriate behaviours, and the wellness

that they can bring, stem from practices that better social and personal relationships with the self and others. The ceremonies, prayers, and protocols can provide order in the chaos of the current Indigenous world. The apprenticeship within the Blackfoot culture will cultivate these culturally based positive behaviours that then will become a way of life.

Pard states the headmen and headwomen of the sacred societies act as the Blackfoot lawyers in the sacred world; they provide spiritual law-and-order for individuals and communities. These “lawyers” protected and regulated behaviours for Blackfoot people historically, and continue to do so in the present. They embody the sacredness of the pipes they carry to protect the people by behaving ethically.

## **Conclusion**

The Indigenous Paradigm represents a cognitive mapping system that asserts the traditional values system as means of asserting and maintaining boundaries for these internal and external functions. Once a synthesis of the paradigm occurs, the individual is on the path towards harmonization and personal reconciliation.

*Aistomatoom* reflects the “coming to embody” or the internalization and awareness of the process of emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual knowledge. The intellectual process reflects the meaning and semantic load of the work involved here. The spiritual aspect of embodiment surrounds the embodiment of prayer itself. The emotional process is not only reflected through the healing incurred, but also through the reclamation of Indigenous and Blackfoot knowledge and traditions. The physicality of embodiment surrounds the embodiment of the ideas and manifesting them through human practices that are real and meaningful. While the spiritual and cultural aspects of Indigenous groups have been the foundation of wellness and harmonized living,

colonization has altered the psychological, spiritual, physical, and intellectual pillars of the Indigenous people. Therefore, if one seeks to understand this knowledge, they must be involved with the people and the practices in which it surrounds (A. Pard, personal communication, June, 2013). This knowledge cannot be learned in the review of this thesis, but rather within the spiritual context and the environment it manifests from.

Leadership, whether it is political or spiritual, has taught me that there is no compromise in personal integrity. You are working for the people who have high levels of colonial behaviours. In the past, Blackfoot people chose their leaders based on their merits. Good leaders behaved in ways congruent with the sacredness of the Blackfoot worldview, and beliefs. The structures of which governed the Blackfoot leadership were unwritten but they were embedded in the ethical and spiritual commitments of the individual to the culture and its spiritual practices. These unwritten structures have not been lost, but they have been relegated to the margins of Blackfoot communities, restricted to the spiritual realms of Blackfoot societies, their participants, and those connected with their Indigenous value system.

The goal of this thesis was to explore, understand, and provide a means to implement these sacred governing concepts. Therefore, once the connections are made with integrity, when “no one is watching,” then transformational change can occur.

I did not know how this study and process would change my life. The transformation process was based on my interactions with the participants and the world they know. I embraced their “offerings” of traditional Blackfoot knowledge that encouraged my transformation. My transformation occurred in my understanding of my personal relationships and that I had to apply this particular way of life in my own life to

authentically heal and decolonize myself. The lessons have continually revealed themselves and it has been a continual blessing to receive them.



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## Appendix A

### Participant A

To protect the misappropriation of the interviews and Indigenous knowledge, no part of Appendix A of this thesis can be reproduced in any shape or form without the thesis author's permission.

#### October 2011

(When I think about prayer and identity, for me to, I don't know, I can definitely identify with that personal journey.) I understood at the beginning that we call upon the spirits to come, there is always that beginning part of the prayer, that calls upon who we believe in, who gave us life. We always call on them and ask them to pity us, help us, pity us, *spoomokit, kimopiipit*. So there is always that first calling, sort of invoking their spirit. Calling them to be present here with us.

And even that particular ceremony, and it's like with all our ceremonies, it's about changing the energy around a situation. So the energy around one situation was that particular, that particular situation that had cancer, diagnosed with cancer. I wanted a healthy strong body. My faith was strong enough to know that the instant I make that Vow, with all that intention, it's done, it's taken care of, and I just need to fulfill that Vow when that time comes. But that instant I made the Vow and said it, it's done. Right? Because you see that with people. That's just the faith. Like that's the faith and belief that that's how our way work.

P4: And another thing, for example as a female, what do we do when people are dancing, when people are with their vows, we trill. And that buzz, buzz, it helps to change the energy. We are sending...sending...

AG: Like support?

P4: Yeah support!

AG: Our energy?

P4: Well it's like, mmmmm, there's an energy, just to change the negative energy, so they need to change it, it needs to be jolted. Like these frequency waves, it's like energy, it's like waves. And it's in a certain way right now, and in this way it's saying I have cancer. With all the ritual and everything that goes on that we do over and over and over again. And with other things, like little things that we do, there's always a purpose, so when we trill, that's part of it too. That helps with the



jolting of those waves and all of a sudden their jolted and now they're scewing off over here, you know what I mean, that's how I visualize it.

AG: Dancers dance harder,

P4: Yes yes

P4: With my faith and belief and that I knew that when I walked away that I was good and I was protected and I was blessed, I could go off and do whatever, and live life and what not. I was also cleansed. There's a sense of cleansing when I used to attend ceremonies to get my face painted. There was a sense. Because when I was younger, my parents made smudges, I didn't have a smudge box in my room, they had it in their room, and they made smudge everyday and they prayed everyday. (Although I prayed, I didn't have my own smudge box because I was like 14, 15, 16, 17 you know, it didn't go with my furniture. [laughter])

P4: But I always knew that that smudge box was there for me, and if I ever felt that I was in a place as a child, because I wasn't the main home owner, I could go into my parents room at any point in time and ask for specific prayers for myself. But I always felt blessed and protected.

Yeah and because a part of it is, it's a spirituality thing in general. Who is it that talks about it, I think it's Louise Hay, I think it was that lady who wrote sacred contracts or whatever, anyhow she spoke about these people who try to fast track to the sacred. And she's referring to these "new-agey" people. So they see these monks, up in the mountains, these Buddhist, they are so powerful and so sacred, I really like that meditation thing they do. So they integrate meditation in their way of life. And they go visit maybe a Blackfoot community and they went to a pipe dance ceremony and they went to the Horn Sundance, and they saw people smudging, "oh I really, really like that, I'm going to start smudging too" and then they go to something else. "I really like this thing about confession in the Catholic Church and that's really powerful because when I did that this is how I felt so I'm going to incorporate that" and it's like they are trying to fast track to the sacred. But what makes these different religions and their different rituals so powerful, for lack of a better word, or so spiritual and so sacred is because those monks up there dedicate their lives to those Vows that they make so their prayers become true because they're so, it's so pure and their loyal and they believe in it and they have faith in it and they follow it to a tee. And that's why it works for them. And so it's like that for the Blackfoot people and this works for us and these miracle manifest because every year we do the same rituals exactly the same way to a tee and we live the whole year, and do those prayers the whole year that those Vows manifest miracles because we are true and loyal and have belief and faith and it's those rituals"

Yeah yeah, because in our way, well in every way, your rituals, whatever your religion, however you practice your spirituality, those rituals create that conduit to the sacred. And it's only in our, for example for the smudge, it's a conduit to the

sacred and these new-agey, “hodge podge” spiritual people, that are borrowing from all over the place. They are trying to create a conduit to the sacred, and I’m sure that they have a conduit to the sacred, and they do experience healing and on their own, however it’s like creating miracles. Like the Buddhist create miracles, the catholic people create miracles, Blackfoot people create miracles. We all create miracles but it’s those ones that are orthodox, the pure..the pure

Yeah. Well the medicine pipe ceremony, that ceremony, I know intimately more than any other ceremonies rights. Like Beaver Bundles or like Brave Dogs or Horns or whatever, like I know a little bit, but I have a very intimate relationship with the medicine pipe ceremony. And when they bring all those medicine pipe people that sit in there, the present owners and previous owners, they all bring those spirits of those pipes that they look after or looked after. And those all have this one, of that present ceremony to manifest this miracle of that person that made that Vow to dance that day. They all support this one to manifest what it is they are asking for. And I knew and I had faith, and I could envision it in the future and my dance, that this is what is going to happen. And even that particular ceremony, and it’s like with all our ceremonies, it’s about changing the energy around a situation. So the energy around one situation was that particular, that particular situation that had cancer, diagnosed with cancer. I wanted a healthy strong body. My faith was strong enough to know that the instant I make that Vow, with all that intention, it’s done, it’s taken care of, and I just need to fulfill that Vow when that time comes. But that instant I made the Vow and said it, it’s done. Right? Because you see that with people. That’s just the faith. Like that’s the faith and belief that that’s how our way work”

(When I think about prayer and identity, for me to, I don’t know, I can definitely identify with that personal journey.) I understood at the beginning that we call upon the spirits to come, there is always that beginning part of the prayer, that calls upon who we believe in, who gave us life. We always call on them and ask them to pity us, help us, pity us, *sboomokit, kimopiipit*. So there is always that first calling, sort of invoking their spirit. Calling them to be present here with us.

I went to church with my grandparents, when it was time to pray, you go up and get your communion and you go kneel down and pray in silence. So I saw that and I saw instantly the difference in that when we go to ceremony we pray out loud. And it was explained to me that is part of our identity, is that we are very Blackfoot and in our worldview and who we are, we are very literal. So it is very important to say...in prayer for example, to say exactly what you want, exactly what you need and exactly what you want to happen. And how that contributes to our identity is that we are sacred. We are sacred individually and our thoughts when they manifest into words, are words manifest into reality in this realm, in this physical world right now. So we have to be very careful. Part of our identity is that we are co-creators of the world, of the environment, of what happens to me, what happens in my home.”

(I always knew that when I got my face painted, that I could ask that elder, right now I am going through blah blah blah, I am going through a separation, or I'm working really hard on my bachelor of education, or I am having a tough time with my teenage daughter, I need some extra strength there. Just before they would paint my face, I could always ask for something special if I needed to. Otherwise if I didn't ask for that, or when I was really young, I didn't know I could do that right?) I always had the faith and belief that the spirit was invoked, this bundle I was getting the paint, the sacred paint, and the elder that was praying over me, they always asked my name. That is part of our name of being really literal. They are asking specific prayers for you individually. So when they pray for you, they have to say your name."

I always knew that when I got my face painted, that I could ask that elder, right now I am going through blah blah blah, I am going through a separation, or I'm working really hard on my bachelor of education, or I am having a tough time with my teenage daughter, I need some extra strength there. Just before they would paint my face, I could always ask for something special if I needed to."

So I remember getting her on the phone and starting to cry so hard, like this was my mom. And then it kind of hit me that maybe I should have rode the bus home, straight home to here, and tell her in person. I started to weep and was crying really hard and then she said stop. Take a deep breath and just stop. When you cry, this sadness, this sadness...yes you are releasing and venting, but this sadness is negative...it's a manifestation of your negative feelings, sadness, hurt, pain, anger. All these negative feelings you're feeling, she said, you need to stop it."

- AG: The natural, that's why they call them Indigenous because it's from that place, so that's really good. Ok, really good stuff. And last point I had was that comment that I shared with you about that personal experience that I shared with you about my mom in the dream, about living life as a ceremony. What does that mean to you?
- P4: That every action, every word, every thought, is sacred. It's sacred. Every feeling, everything that we do is sacred, and it becomes...we have full and complete respect for our fellow human being. And when we don't wish any ill will on any...when you're in ceremony and you're praying, and this is what living life as a ceremony is. So in ceremony what are you doing? You are co-creating. You are consciously choosing your prayers and your words because that's what you want to manifest.

Otherwise the other part of our spirituality, is when you don't follow through with your vows, bad luck happens, bad things can happen, if you don't follow your vows. If the words you choose are negative, if your actions and feelings you choose are negative, anger or whatever, you're invoking badness or *saapoomapii* to come. You're inviting for something to happen. It is

AG: I've been hearing that word come up a lot about our prayers, *spiritual confidence*. In that you can't just leave it, you can't just...there's almost a part that we have to play alongside, like you said, co-creators. There's onus and responsibility on the spirit world, on the bundles and everything, like making the Vows

P4: Like making the Vows and fulfilling them and praying for exactly what we want and we always have that. I think nowadays in that pop psychology they talk about, don't talk about what you don't want, we all know what you don't want, put it in terms that you want. Blackfoot people knew that and we lived that. And that's who we were and that's how our ways work

You pray that you are going to be healthy and strong, and you are going to do whatever it is that the doctors tell you to do, but you are also going to dance with that pipe and it's going to be done. When you walk away from that offering you don't even look back, and you just know that you're good and that it's all going to be taken care of, and I said okay. And I guess reflecting back upon that, and I remember putting down that offering and prayed really hard, and I cried while I prayed and I remember turning around and actually feeling literally lighter. Because I had complete faith, because I know our medicine pipes are sacred beings that come and live with us and different families have the privilege to be caretakers of these sacred beings. They manifest miracles. And I know that they do. But part of that is your faith and belief in it, right."

The rituals themselves are very sacred and done for very specific reasons, and yes anybody and everybody can join, if you are ready to make those kinds of vows and those kinds of commitments because there is a lot of responsibility with it, so that that sacred entity can do its work. Otherwise the other part of our spirituality, is when you don't follow through with your vows, bad luck happens, bad things can happen, if you don't follow your vows. If the words you choose are negative, if your actions and feelings you choose are negative, anger or whatever, you're invoking badness or *saapoomapii* to come. You're inviting for something to happen. It is.

And so what she explained to me, was that you go outside, you take a piece of tobacco and you go outside, and you pray. You pray to *Natoosi, Istopatopiohp*, and you put that tobacco offering down and you make a vow that you dance with our pipe, and at that time it was...My parents used to look after that pipe, medicine pipe. And she said you're going to dance with our pipe in the spring and when you put that tobacco offering down, it's done. You pray that you are going to be healthy and strong, and you are going to do whatever it is that the doctors are going to tell you to do, but you are also going to dance with that pipe and it's going to be done. When you walk away from that offering you don't even look back, and you just know that you're good and that it's all going to be taken care of, and I said okay."

(...<sup>9</sup>, and I will just choose that one bundle, for...to do its job, it needs a nice safe home. So part of my job, if it was here, if I was the caretaker, I would make sure that my home would be a nice safe place for it to be, and I would make sure I would be always home with it and if I wasn't home I would make sure it's at the babysitters, it's like a child right.) And make sure that protocol was being followed and also to the way you conduct yourself, the way you think, that's why they call it a sacrifice, or they call it some people refer to our way of life as hard, because there is a lot of self sacrifice, human sacrifice, that goes along with being able to enable to that sacred entity to work through you and it can't work through you if you don't follow the protocol, if you don't have the rituals”

All these negative feelings you're feeling, she said, you need to stop it.) You go outside. And so what she explained to me, was that you go outside, you take a piece of tobacco and you go outside, and you pray. You pray to *Natoosi, Istopatopiohp*, and you put that tobacco down and you make a vow that you dance with our pipe. At that time it was...My parents used to look after that pipe, medicine pipe. And she said you're going to dance with our pipe in the spring and when you put that tobacco offering down, it's done. You pray that you are going to be healthy and strong, and you are going to do whatever it is that the doctors tell you to do, but you are also going to dance with that pipe and it's going to be done. When you walk away from that offering you don't even look back, and you just know that you're good and that it's all going to be taken care of, and I said okay.”

For example, like the Blackfoot way, the spirituality is if you take care of the spirit, everything else is taken care of. Your thoughts, your physical health. Your everything. Because that's the purpose of our ceremonies, is to change the energy around a negative situation.”

Yes it's a proactive life and it's like we co-create and manifest exactly what we say. And exactly what we feel. And exactly what we believe in, what we have faith in. And that's why my mom said, even those negative feelings, like fear or sadness, or anger, like why me? Like don't even ask that, don't even ask that question to invoke that negative feeling of anger”

So in ceremony what are you doing? You are co-creating. You are consciously choosing your prayers and your words because that's what you want to manifest.”

Yeah and because a part of it is, it's a spirituality thing in general. Who is it that talks about it, I think it's Louise Hay, I think it was that lady who wrote sacred contracts or whatever, anyhow she spoke about these people who try to fast track to the sacred. And she's referring to these “new-agey” people. So they see these monks, up in the mountains, these Buddhist, they are so powerful and so sacred, I

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<sup>9</sup>An ellipsis (...) is inserted to indicate omitted material. Some material is omitted to protect the anonymity of Participant A, to remove identifying factors.

really like that meditation thing they do. So they integrate meditation in their way of life. And they go visit maybe a Blackfoot community and they went to a pipe dance ceremony and they went to the Horn Sundance, and they saw people smudging, “oh I really really like that, I’m going to start smudging too” and then they go to something else. “I really like this thing about confession in the Catholic Church and that’s really powerful because when I did that this is how I felt so I’m going to incorporate that” and it’s like they are trying to fast track to the sacred. But what makes these different religions and their different rituals so powerful, for lack of a better word, or so spiritual and so sacred is because those monks up there dedicate their lives to those Vows that they make so their prayers become true because they’re so, it’s so pure and they’re loyal and they believe in it and they have faith in it and they follow it to a tee. And that’s why it works for them. And so it’s like that for the Blackfoot people and this works for us and these miracle manifest because every year we do the same rituals exactly the same way to a tee and we live the whole year, and do those prayers the whole year that those Vows manifest miracles because we are true and loyal and have belief and faith and it’s those rituals, their so part of it. And that’s something that I think when it comes to any kind of spirituality that we can respect other ways and know that when I go into Cree territory and their having a ceremony of some sort I’m not going to start correcting them because that’s their way and that’s what they do and that’s their ceremony and I’m just a visitor and I will participate. Because we have our way and when others come to our ceremonies they respect our ways and they are not correcting us and we know what we are doing and we are doing it for a very specific reason and at the same time as us in healing and some of us groping our way through this cultural confusions, it’s important not only for us but definitely counsellors to understand that there are definitely elders in the Blackfoot community that practice orthodox Blackfoot and there are elders that are senior citizens”

And so even on a daily basis, and taking that feeling and that life, and living that life in this contemporary world, and we are out driving down the highway, or we are out in the office building or at our computer, living your life as a ceremony, the same protocols are all in tact when you see these society members, or when you see anybody your still greeting them with a handshake. The everyday rituals that we do when we greet people of our own culture or even when we greet somebody of another culture, to me that’s still ceremony. Also too just really thinking about consciously what we say out loud. If I’m speaking to my CEO or one of my supervisors, about something I’m concerned about work. I’m still, my words are still being chosen like I’m praying, and I need to be careful about what I say and that’s part of it. I’m not wanting to hurt anybody’s feelings, I’m not wanting to offend anybody, so that’s living life as a ceremony. So consciously knowing that I’m co-creating in every single moment, in whatever I’m doing.”

...that everything that we do is ceremony, and we do it for a reason, and making sure that my home, as I was saying earlier, the caretakers of bundles are the physical manifestation of that spirit, of that bundle, they have that transferred rite. So they are that. For those bundles to be able to do their work through that person,

that person needs to look after themselves and respect themselves and be do their job so that the bundle can do their job”

So there is always that first calling, sort of invoking their spirit. Calling them to be present here with us. And then I didn't understand everything that was inside of the prayer for a long time but I knew that somewhere along the prayer as I started going and knowing my Blackfoot name, I would listen...for example, my dad prays, I would listen and listen and listen and know for sure that he was going to ask for help and prayer for me. That was my turn during the prayer to bring that prayer to my heart, to take it in, to accept it. That spirit that has been invoked is going to be here with me. Yes to connect and take it with me.

I attended and I always felt part of the ceremony because even though, we do have some, I knew that the ones that had transferred rites, that were invoking the spirit, that were the conduits to the sacred, they were in a certain, they sat in a certain place, Blackfoot spiritual ceremonies or Blackfoot rituals are very structured that way, It's a very structured spirituality when it comes to the ritual part.”

Part of who I am as a female and as someone who respect and loves being a feminine, that there's a feminine side to every single ceremony. And there's certain elders that will explain it in whichever way but from what I understand that in our Blackfoot way, there is a definite role that the females take.

The men are our workers. The women sit because we look after. When those bundles are transferred, they can't be transferred to a man all by himself, they are transferred to the woman and the man is her worker and he does all the physical stuff. And in our ceremonies it seems like it's very male dominated, and the male and all the rituals involve with the male, it's the male who drums and the male who dance, it's because they are our workers. They need to go and have those sweats to be purified, but not us, not us. But they can't have that sweat without us. It's a very balanced male and female roles.

Also there is a part of the prayer, where an elder or people who are praying will pray for the different society members, *aspoomossa Niipomakiiks*, all the *Niipoomakiiks* will take that prayer to our heart. *Kiinantsoomootaks*, *Kookooiks*, *Mootokiiks*, *Niinamskaks*, aka *Niinamskaks*, all, in those sections of the prayer, so you get to know, you can identify in the room or in the tipi or within the ceremony, if you don't know anybody there, at least you know when they say *Iikskinaaks*, and you see all these different people taking that prayer, so that's a Horn member, so I know certain protocol. As time moves on, you get to know how to be around those different, because there is different protocol for different transferred rights and different society people. (I think that's what really important and speaks to our identity, like who we are as Blackfoot people that we understand and many of our prayers will include those society members, because we know that those transferred rites, with those people, they are the physical

manifestation of that particular bundle or whatever it is that they are taking care of at the moment.)”

...the caretaker is the physical manifestation of the bundle, like of the spirit. Like we have the bundle itself with all its sacred items in there but that's part, for the ritual, like the bundle itself, with all of its sacred items in there, but that's part for the ritual. We know that the bundle, the sacred entity itself, it's going to do its work through its items in the bundle. But the person with the transferred rites, they do that work through that person. For example when they do that work through that person, for example when these elders that paint faces, they've take care of those bundles before. So they, that bundle, that spiritual entity, through that bundle, that item, so for example you specifically go and get your face painted as a female, that female elder will pray, will do its work through the prayer, through the paint and through the item that you get blessed with, and it's doing its work through that person with those rites.

[End of interview.]



## Appendix B

### Andrew Blackwater

To protect the misappropriation of the interviews and Indigenous knowledge, no part of Appendix B of this thesis can be reproduced in any shape or form without Andrew Blackwater's permission.

#### March 2012

- AG: (Makes introduction of study, and review of ethical requirements, as well as format and questions.) Do you have any questions?
- AB: I would like to make a statement that will go hand n<sup>10</sup> hand with the consent form; first of all, I consider this...process referred to as a process of transferring my knowledge to you , perhaps to others, in our language we use the term (*Kaa sii noon* or *aww skitta*) as an individual summoned me as an Elder, to help you in respect to the traditional knowledge Blackfoot knowledge, I always like to make it clear, whatever I offer or reply on some of the question that may be asked. all that knowledge belongs to the Blackfoot speaking people it belongs to the pass, today and the futures, members of the Blackfoot speaking people, so I did not, none of this started from me , it was already there when I got involved I just started picking up by becoming a part of the sacred society such as the horns, I was in there for six years the first round that I did under Wilton Good Striker leadership and took the yellow staff, then the second time and waited 5 years then went back for another 5 years, a total of 11 years an active, but once we are a horn member, we are a horn society member for life (*Iii skii naakii*) for life or eternity, put it that way. Once we leave this existents earth, mother earth, we go on the other side we carry that, so today summons the spirit of my ancestors my elders my teachers from the other side I summons them to be with me or to be with us. I will explain that and go thru the process of praying. I wanted to make sure I think we had a problem with other elders before, the whole notion of intellectual property in the Whiteman system of publishing and you know. All the confrontation there is a tendency to assume ownership of that material and that it belongs to everyone, not just the one interview. So it belongs to the Blackfoot speaking people in some cases some might have ownership of it. that is important again I did mention to you earlier I don't mind being recorded, to be recorded I am one of the few, as they say over here on blood reserve we sort of the last generation that speak fluent Blackfoot, and of course we speak fluent English too.

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<sup>10</sup> Due to time constraints, transcriptions will contain many grammatical, spelling, and other human errors.

We are at the cross roads the ones that younger than me they are the ones that mix up the two languages eventually the younger tend to go with more English than Blackfoot we are trying to reverse the trend. The reason I don't mind being recorded I can speak to the issues and topic in the matters in both languages to almost to the point we don't need a translator, I will do it as I go thru it will benefit the ones that understand the language and the ones that are not fluent or don't know speak you know, understand the language, we will try work it out that way.

22:20 Just to have a good understanding of the intent you know as well as the process , as you have spoke to that of the document that you read, I understand thoroughly that is the point where very cautious of the intellectual property. I was directly involved with the digital library from red crow I was an elder, I was sort of asked to participate in that, at the start to establish the foundation for it. Then they started a more technical after that. I have a thorough understanding. I have made many recording lately, perhaps they are the ones you should get a hold of, these are on, on DVD's I did one not even a month ago, for red crow studies, you might want to get a copy of, that one is more specifically geared to the people that you just mentioned. Our younger people that hear us older people pray in our language but they don't get a chance to really understand the way that we pray, they don't understand, they don't know the Blackfoot words, of course I will speak to that later, the whole notions of traditional worldview, that we have to know, we have to address that, that we have a traditional worldview, then everything else will work for us. That is what will happen to now. People came to our source, and they're making us to see the world through their eyes not allowing us to see through our own eyes our interpretation of our back ground, spoke to our physically background to our existence, so what I did, I think I will do the same thing is, I will actually go through a prayer. In fact we should pray, but will do it as we go along, the gifts and offering they are very appropriate. I think you are making a very good approach to this thing, it is a good co...I am glad I am doing a recording and speaking of our people of the past, I am speaking of our people today, not necessary for our speaking but I am speaking about us, I am speaking for our future children. in our way you speak for yourself, there is a Blackfoot word...<sup>11</sup>

27:24 ...(You don't speak for people, if they are capable of making their own statement) unless they are little children , the knowledge to speak to the topic or matter so then we speak for them and act in their best interest. it must be. that came out in the consent form, I often stated commence my statement my contribution of whatever it is we are trying to do, or acquire whatever. I always state I'm doing this for future children, I'll speak on, not necessarily on their behalf but hopefully they learn from what I am saying, they can make their own decision, as a elder, most of the elders we do not impose ourselves on others, I'm

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<sup>11</sup> Some omitted material, as indicated by the use of ellipsis (...) include Blackfoot words, which are currently unable to be transcribed.

not going to impose on you, we will give you all the information whatever you need for you to come up with your own decision at the end I may speak for two hours but I will allow you to make a decision. With that opportunity to make a decision for yourself, that is going to be like that in the future you may not develop the skills to make a decision as well to be responsible for your decision, you are the one responsible cause you made the decision. it is important to practice all the time. in our way we use the term (*Kaa sii no nikks awaa skata*) these are statement that are addressed in respect to an individual a relationship to an elder like to day (*Kii daa skaa*) I take it as that, an elder teacher of our ways (*kii daa skaa*) whatever protocol in that process, I applied, and you'll have a good understanding and you must already have a good understanding with that thing you spoke to quite a bit of that statement, that is important to know that. An elder individual like you, when you approach a elder, you have to be very specific, you have to be clear as to what you want from the elder, lot of times that is where the mistake is, is that we just assume an elder read your mind, we automatically know everything that you need, you have to be very specific and state your purpose to see the end. to have an idea what it's going to be at the end of thesis process what you hope to do the outcome of that, and of course elders like myself I gona visit with you , and I will provide you with what you need, but I still have to talk with some other elders I work with to ensure that this is the proper process to take and providing the right information, that is important you have to be very clear also, and spoke to the validation in our way *aa poomostoo* (we transfer rights to each other, if I give you a buffalo stone or sweet grass I am giving you the rights to use it in the Blackfoot way. that is the process itself transferring rights to each other, in the future when you are going to smudge burn sweet grass then you will validate what you are doing, and then you'll reference *aa stoo doo*

33:52 (Shot On Both Side) you will reference me, about this time fall time of the year, I interview and we when through the process of smudging he taught me and gave me the right that was handed to him, the right he acquire to transfer to you. That is the proper protocol. there is time at a gathering you will be asked, to speak to, to a topic or matter what ever, you will get up and then you will of course, deal with your background your education or experience in life or path, along the lines what it is your talking about, but in our case, you'll start to reference individual by name, you will also reference the witness that were there (*ii to da po yii-* or *iidapoyii*) this person name is Joe whatever, he was there and stood by us and he witness the ceremony that took place the transferring of those rights, so we continue to validate based on this (*ii sto stim*) what the word mean you actually, somebody imposed on you. the transferring at the actual ceremony and took your hand to the smudge four times and gave you that right, you experience it (*koo sti sta do*) I experienced that (*iitstii st do*) the one that did the actual transfer so you might say *Kaa sii*) you may refer to Dan Weasel Moccasin my most wise and intelligent elder, that don't speak English never went to school, but taught me more than what I learned in books, what he taught me I will use a couple of his teaching I always reference him. The times I was with him, the people know him, so people like that very knowledgeable elders way back.

37:37 that teaches us our own version of psychology and our physiology they will teach you that, in a way, you start to realize that it is universal it is different situation, different individual, different language, but the message is basically the same, one might be deeper than other, some might be very complicated, just like I tried to look at the east Indian all those, mentioned symbolism we can't understand, to complex. in our way it is simplified and straight forward, the emotion behind it touches you emotionally, that is the real impact of learning *Nii sti dap ii* you feel that., those are some of the things that sort of came out with, some of my conclusion, and they kinda work. That is what I wanted to make a statement. Like I said earlier, we have had some negative experience with the intellectual property area, but we dealt with it, internally of course, *Kainai-Piikani Sisika Amskapii*, we had opportunities to meet with each other. *So koo sti staa pii daakii*

40:15<sup>12</sup> Only the *kainaisinn* the declaration of our tribe can be used as a preamble to the constitution it suggests and speaks to the tribes and the...

40:40 Of course it speaks to our philosophy that we are trying to sustain to keep in place and not to alter too much, it is a statement of principal, the values of what kinda of a driving force in the relationship of individual, that individual and the rest of the people our community is the balance, in our Blackfoot world it is

41:38 ...*kiima pii piisinn*, that is what in combination of those terms is that relationship of our emotional relationship could be negative could be positive, *Kii ma pii pii sinn* to have

42:15 Compassion, to take care of our people, knowing we will never leave anyone behind. We always move forward at the end we are always a family a clan, that is why we always talk of the, the underlying thing that helps create a very positive environment of which is conducive to learning, or well-being and all that harmony. That is important, it is the values wants the you know, relying and depending the value and strongly promotes the environment, we can create the environment, us combined in our enforce, that is (*Ii sti mo kaaa*)...

43:43 Maybe now we can get started with the actual prayer, I'll just explain it as we go we are really praying. The important thing I have come to realize we need to have a basic understanding, that there are forces out there,

44:10 ...(*Saa koo sti sakoo sti sa do sii do*) we are sensitive we can see these and we can feel, like in directness of energy to you positive, make you feel good and make you smile or I can swear at you, and you will be reflective in your reactive, In live, we need to understand

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<sup>12</sup> Transcribers entered a time code in their transcriptions of an audio recording of the interviews. Often this indicated the use of a Blackfoot term that they were unable to translate.

44:45 *Li taa pa poo kaa, saa it po ma pii*, those forces that flow around and there is a negative and positive out there, that is why when you smudge, then you go like this...both hands two on each side, basically, that part is to shield yourself, against the negative forces, so that they don't penetrate and you are protective. That is why we smudge every day, that is why we smudge our home, it is not that we doing it, because we feel that, but we don't understand what we are doing, it , we need to understand what we are doing, what really transpires, is that each one of us, have our own personal life force, and that is what we are talking of the creator, that creator life flows through us, the life force gives us life at the end there will be separation from your physically life being and that part will drift away, of course. But this one keeps going, you continue to be a force, so your dissidence will calling upon you (*spoo mo kin- kaa sinno -niiks nook spoo mo -ki do dap o yit*) stand by me, give me good thought, give me wisdom, knowledge so I can make good decision and walk in proper direction to walk in a good path, you are asking them to help us. You have to have some understanding all these things we are doing, the ceremonies, that is basically we are what is the proper—manipulation is a little not the proper word, but we can direct, you can play with these things, we can make them very powerfully, and positive.

AG: Like with intention

AB: And that in time has an impact with individual or group, and then there they are they create a positive environment, they in turn can create that positive environment or it can be the other way, we can be destructive, people can bad mouth it is bad in politics that is where it comes out, start back stabbing, make false statements, then you become a person that is destructive, and you can harm people you don't realize, you can do that, even the way you conduct yourself, you send a message around you, and sooner or later and find yourself along, no one want to be with you. sending our bad vibes, you're sort of a poison, lot of our people get like that, some of the people are victims of circumstance, the people panhandling this time of the morning, first thing they got up this morning, they knew what they had to do, they got ready they went out and panhandle for them it's a survival, the way we pray we need understand we impact on each other sometimes if we are close to a person we can have great impact on our children, spouse, our parents, and family, we can have a great impact on them, sometimes always people in there that carry the negative-ness with them which is destructive, it goes against what you want to be ideally, is to feel good, a general well-being, not carefree, but feeling good about yourself and people around you. And...

50:53 feeling good about what you're doing, we have to understand that, I have witness, I'm going to do berry soup for Horns next summer, I see signs that are not so good and I promise to make the soup, but the person carries out the same way, still has their own negative, still very destructive in doing so, it doesn't work because from the point you made the vow to the point you are going to cook the berry soup and what about the time between you have to change your ways right away to that point, then you say *iitsitapitapiyop*. Creator I have fulfilled my promise to you., if you haven't change except for when you cook the berry soup

you cannot tell creator that you have succeeded, perhaps you might have been lying,

53:02 When you finish the berry soup you go right back...

53:13 ...it is complex, complicated, I think sometimes, some people are like that, they seem to think as long as I'm not in direct contact with the younger people, I'm not a bad example, I will continue to drink and do my own thing, no you are still affected, cause they still see you, your actions still have an impact on a lot of things, you have to realize that to know and accept and quit denying even when you know your being a bad example a bad role model, you still denying cause you're not making direct contact, it works in many ways, we are a very powerful beings as individual, if we combine all our forces, like what we do at horns and women's society as Anglicans and Catholics we come to the church and someone will ask for the people blessing and concentrate our thought on the one, our energy it helps to heal that person, the other, we are all directing energy on that person, and our...

55:20 our grandfather our teachers, you have to help yourself with the prayer you cannot just take 20 dollars from your pocket, and say pray for you. It is up to you to utilize that person power you can't buy your way out of it, you have to help yourself, with what is given to us, like the society or smudging, you have to learn to use it, I see some cases where you have a sweet grass hanging on the wall for years, it is turning yellow it is still all intact, the message you get from that, how come it is just sitting there the people should be using to help themselves that it when you active the power of it, the grass of it, that is when you utilize the spirit of the plant and you use for the protection and what other ways you use sweet grass you have to learn to do these things,

AG: It is a commitment on both sides, for the individuals, and they have the commitment from the spiritual people and those entity but there is an onus and responsibility of the individual

AB: The potential is there, what is taught to you to activate, those things that need energies of the forces, gifts of the animals, gifts of birds, gifts of the constellations they all have the special gifts and you want those to be directed to you, to strengthen your words in prayer,

58:06 ...your special gifts special gifts, direct them to me I'm going to address the creator, for these unfortunate people that are sick, in jail, street people neglected children and elders, pray for everybody you ask all parts of creation to directed their energy and gifts to you, to really help the people that we pray for, again, there is a process of the directing energy to we understand that The ceremonies you can direct through the ceremonies, that is important that we understand if we don't understand that what happens in that situation, just like one elder taught me, it is important that you know understand the source of things, especially sacred items, it is important t to know the source and origin, of these

things if you don't like in some cases, they don't know or weren't given the proper, what this elder said, all you can do is

1:00 ...you just see and feel the spiritual significant but you don't understand and symbolic, being practical,

AG: The surface ...

AB: You just feel that there is something out there but you don't understand, rather than trying to understand the *Nitowapii*

1:01 ...using that to put or have an effect on somebody or things, it is like a manipulation of those things, so you can use or direct them to what you want to have done. its...what we consider what is holy and sacred what it is, try to understand, it's simple to understand I just give you a dirty look, I understand if I do that, I will have a negative impact without speaking to you, I have directed that energy that will take effect on you, and you will take in a negative way and react in the same way, get you anger or mad or you run away, any way I jump up and shake your hand and open the door and that is positive impact it is healing, as opposed to destroy something, it is easy, but you have to sit and think about it

1:03 ...creator help me today, I'm only here..., to serve you, whatever it is who ever needs help, to help these people...once you understand what I'm talking about...we start off with , we are not all the same, no one every says the same prayer, and a min after I won't say the same thing cause things come to us automatic, so we usually start *Hiyo napii na tosii*, the holy one, your holy, *spoomokiit* help me or you will start with

1:04 ...the spirit of our ancestors are holy and sacred were they are at this time, what is where they are at...just like angels. help us your children and grandchildren help us today stand by us, speak to us, sing the sacred songs to us,

1:05 ...help us...the messages you left us with, help us, to fulfill those things that we need to do, to continue to do that, of course then you go to the constellation,

1:06 ...all those that shine up there, the sun...the lady,...morning star...Help us,...you are all gifted with special powers such as the sun-heat, light, what make and helps plants grow, what prevents us from freezing, what gives us light, to see light, you call on the spirit of the constellation to direct their special powers to us, and the birds that fly, that go south in the winter, that bring all the songs to us, and the messages in the spring, that bring new life, with them when they come back in the spring. Speak to the four...

1:07 ...you provide with the sustenance the food, we need sustain our lives, another ways we use, they have gifts of special gifts, of course,...whatever grows on your body mother earth we call on all of you. those that provide us for medicinal purposed, to sustain food and those that we use for food and shelter...

1:08:22 like our clothing, speak to them in that way, acknowledge the powers of them, hopefully, to convince them to direct their powers to us, of course speak to the being up there, the mountains, the water, the north snow, speak to them, then you speak to the creator...source of life...take pity on us,...I'm pitiful and I need help, I am working for you,...you are speaking for the people in our traditional territory put all of the resources out there, it is up to us to go out there and gather and harvest those gifts, the resources so we can continue to sustain life so we, sort of the understanding, we have and we say it out so our creator know, that we do understand the purpose of our existence, all parts of creations, they kinda all fit in interdependent, interrelate, all of that, the terminology, of course you speak for the poor people,...those that are sick, those in the hospital, those worry of health condition,...it is very difficult to worry of your health,...those people on the street that are lost, the people in jail, people in court, those are lost people, they are victims of the mentioned, the residential victims of society, the odds in our lives, the impact they have on them, that they turn out that way, they are the product the jurisdiction authority that were subject to, we are the product,

1:11:42 ...help them to go thru school at least to understand what is out there, we might be able to learn how to cope with them and to deal with it to our advantage, not to stop the whole thing of disadvantage, we learn to speak the language, we learn to read, write books, learn high technology and the whole communication that we get to know all of that, we don't want to be left behind, we have to be diverse, in our..., the key principal to continue to seek better survival, better things to help us to survive and to acknowledge the diversity, we need to be diverse, like today what you are wearing, is not what we worn a couple hundreds of years ago, we are diverse, we learn to use or to be part of, or to not being left behind and move ahead with time and with the environment out there, those are the kinds of things we pray for, of course we pray for our leadership, our leadership is handicap, they think they have a lot , the government will just allow us to play around with toy around with, the bigger picture they still control, we pray for guidance from past leaders 100-200 yrs ago to provide the leadership skills and qualities, and of course we pray for people that are responsible caring for sacred bundles. need to pray for them to remain on the right path, not to go all over, of course, one of the most important we share the way to pray for everybody, we don't leave anybody out...

1:15:15 when you say that, you not only praying for your people...you pray for everybody, those other people are part of creation they are part of creation too. we pray for everybody and that is where it is difficult sometimes, we gone to dislike ...white people, dislike for more the white people because of what they done to us, if we pray like that it is like I forgive everybody, also I forgive myself, you have to forgive yourself too. it has to work that way, and what hopefully at the end if we ever get to that point when we all coexist the underlying thing, maybe in the future when we are all total simulated, we might be the new order, everyone is on a equal level, I don't know if that is attainable but at least it is a thought, our children to continue to challenge life going thru education, be able to overcome difficulty, look at them as challenges not as obstacles, we have to teach our



children to look at these things and go at things head on, challenge things, that is how you develop your skills, you notice that in our community, I take my grandchildren to Wal-Mart, I sit and I just watch them they are all over the place and eventually they stop, and they are thinking, they start to see, start to realize what they have done, has a negative effect on others, they start to understand, the right and wrong, the right way of doing things and the wrong way, we let them discover to a point, can't allow to play with a knife, you are there and you guide them, that is why a lot of our younger tend to mature faster, or the other start to mature, they discover things earlier,...

1:19 You don't bang or slap them for every little thing,...I see that that in white people...I see that, I go to Wal-Mart or Safeway boy, those parents they are wicked in the ways they slap their kids hands, the kid wants a chocolate bar or candy, they just get furious, I can't understand that, how do you expect this person to be a good person, your seeding something or implanting something that will come out that is why some people...

1:20 They don't have the sense of responsibility just all for myself as long as I get the most, and the hell with the rest, that is important too. To continue to observe our children not allow them to get out of site, some kids will climb and some will help each other, stack things and climb, those are the important things in respect to our children, allow them to discover their surrounding the environment start picking up, stop in their tracks and they think, so of course we pray that we see each other, on a long life, a full life, and of course our mother earth, we always acknowledge that mother earth is our body, our body is mother earths body, we always ask for a smooth path, avoid the rough you know, and those things we request for...

1:22 The good things in life, we request for them, that they come into our space, you know, there directed to us, of course, those harmful things flow the other way...

1:22 even in the language...that flows around, drifts around is a notion or indication Were notions of energy that flow, and we speak to please allow that positive things, positive energies flow to us, and those negative...

1:23 negative thing to flow, we have a understanding of that as we go, again, I will say if we don't have that understanding it is going to be difficult...one of the most important things that we taught, be careful to what we are saying, be careful, you could harm individuals if we say negative, we could harm an individual it is like often hear that...your shot,...you hear that from, especially those handgame players, I don't know that, they must feel the impact, in competitive sport there is lots of that, the elder will say be careful, to project those to another individual to hurt those people, if you miss it is going to go right back in a circular way, right back to your family, children, go back to you. so always be careful as to what you say to others, and if you don't succeed and penetrate to

harm those people you will harm yourself, that is a general rule, that we don't say and use, if you speak in English you're not as conscious as that,

AG: Why is that?

AB: It is the elders can't convey those teaching in English, part of that is the language the way we say it, and the way English terminology that is not often expressed that, or caution you;

AG: Would you say that English lacks spirit?

AB: Yeaaa, you could say that it lacks the projecting, you know, Projecting energies, or directed, I've seen some people that are gifted with that mental special gift, use their minds effecting, this one guy bends a spoon, just with his mind. Concentration that is learning to direct those energies will affect that and we will just change that,...

1:27 We were rivalries with each other not in a sense extinguish the term in all of the...we need them to challenge us, challenge each other, once in a while they come together, they will challenge each other of who has more powers, then they will use, and use little symbolic things and they will come to life, using that against each other, challenge who's got more power, the crees, they love medicine, they have that, at the end of praying them we always again to repeat that kind of things, to live a full life,...*naa pii you sinn* is old age, or old wise people, to reach that age of wisdom absolute wisdom that comes with age, we ask for that, like what I am doing today, hopefully the wisdom is to give to you and to others, eventually you will be there and you will be telling people, you have to look at life, this way, look at life this way once and a while cause I have experience and you use that to help the younger people, so that is part of the request...

1:30:34 to have the opportunity to raise our children in our way we believe that our children are only gifts from creator to allow and the privilege to raise them to...*kainapatapissim* to the following of the teachings and traditions and to conduct ourselves as *Sisikasttapiii* for the for all of our children belong to all of us, we have a joint ownership that is the communal ownership as well as the collective, tells us that our children belong to all of us,...

1:31:48 we are responsible sense of ownership then we have a sense of responsibility then we are obligated to have a say as to how our children how they should be raised, and we have and obligated to ensure that these children are treated in the right way, so once in a while you're here, you can't say anything because they are my children, not thru discussion going back to our own research and in our history and the understanding natural laws we follow we came to the point a statement was made in principle a core principal that our children belong to all of us, the children have to know that we are all their parents or grandparents it works both way, that is why it was so easy with our custom adoption, you want

to help someone out that has lots of children you might just go there to raise one of their children or if you have no children and you just go over and take one, the good thing of the traditional adoption, those children also adopted me, one there is Cree background, at one year old, we adopted the child and today he is 50. custom adoption we never had to ask permission , never had to ask for help everything was treated us like other grandchildren we pray for that, and the final one...

1:34: 55 at the end we will make mention is to have an environment to have harmony and a general well-being, that type of environment of which is conducive to raising children, we might say also in respect to preparing our children for adult hood, on their own, independence, and often mention may our homes be like nests, where these young birds, chicks, take flight from, or take flight from our homes, and you know how it's important it is the chick has only one chance to stand on the edge, if he is pushed over, he will take flight or go straight down, we pray that our homes be like the nest of the birds, prepare our children to take flight on their own. to be able to survive They have been given the skills, we pray for that, I have never heard for anybody praying for residential school, when we flew out of those building we all dropped to the ground we were all injured. that is basically in terms of the praying part , That is it in terms of praying we have to understand it physiological, the world is dynamic not static, nothing every remains the same all the time. Things change with time, sometimes we can affect those changes, in the way that we want to, we have the power to do it. we have great power to do, we have great healing powers that is what praying is all about, we are basically looking at, from our world from our own traditional view or eyes or whatever we preserve, you know, is then translated into something, conclusion using our own minds an understanding for our purpose for our existence and that is what we need to teach our white brothers and sisters, in the world we are living in, it is too competitive, as a young I was a social worker, some people get their cheque at the middle of the month, social will issue their cheque and they will go out in the extended family, and all go out, when the one family gets their cheque and share their good fortune, just over night they are broke they know this guy is next, they all wait for that person, it is a continuation of sharing good fortune, and the bad part is it is limited, unless some people learn to work to get better things, in order to get a better job, you need to get education, the money you have freedom to go buy whatever it is to go buy, I always say argue with some people to be poor is a matter of choice, unless you are handicap, lot of young people out there in town on the street, they have an opportunity to go back to upgrading and life skills, to grade school, graduate, college and get into the trades, and some it is just basically given up. They don't have hope. There is just no hope, they just continue to exist one day at a time for them, they make to from day to day whatever they need, they will do it, but not do more, they develop that kind of mentality, your born into families that have been in the system forever, when you get older then you become a part of the vicious cycle, and you know there is opportunity out there, but you choose not to, to motivate yourself and go out and take on the challenge and get educated, and you don't have to look at the people driving nice vehicles you don't have to be envious. Unless you are handicap, that is basically what the elders are trying to do. My grandfather said to

stick your hands out, you notice you can move separately you, you have the ability to move separately or work together, that is what he taught me, every time you get in a tough situation do, what can this do. or this one or that one,

AG: Like your options

ABW: That is life , it is not the same as your toes, Some people they just use this, to hitch hike, some people, you go out there and you serve your fellow human being and you give them something cause you care, you give them part of yourself, stretch your hand out and offer them something or take the easy way, stretch your hand out and you want the system to give you, you think they owe you, we can't think like that and some of our people are starting to think like that, I had some arguments being poor is a matter of choice, you don't have to be poor how do you define being poor again. and the only word I know is *Kiimadaspii*...it can apply to many things *Iistaastiil*...it's a Lazy, put the two together of course you will be poor, don't want to do anything, don't want to secure a better job, developing their skills, they are not motivated, and they go hand in hand, unless you are handicap, they didn't get the proper schooling you can't speak the language those are some of the lessons, that we sometimes sort of confront the people that own the trading post, when I get there they all come around the corner, what I figured these people they got to learn to give, rather than just receiving, they are good, they know how to get you, they will say *oki nappii*, I just tell you...we are not *nappii* we weren't in the same society, some may have never did confront them in that way, I thought about it, I know what I'm going to do, I took some change, I'm not being mean, a guy asked me and drinks all the time, he is out on the street, panhandling, I will give you this Toney and I want to hear you pray then I will give you the Toney, I had it like that, took him by surprise and he was shy she was starting to mumble, I told him you better pray louder, he started to he was giggling, and he was serious and he managed to pray, I bought your praying and your blessing they will do it, but they are hesitant, they are not used to retuning for something what you got. Now they kinda of avoid me. They come to realize that they don't want to pray, they might make false promises. I pretty well had it for today.

Maybe give me a ring, from what I shared maybe you can start to get into the areas if you have questions. And we can expand on it. in the mean time I will continue to think of other things, in this process, we never went into the sacred part of our ways, that way we are good, we don't go into that, the important thing to bring across is to understand that we have powers that perhaps that we don't have, we can combine to affect a whole neighborhood just to get the people thinking and motivating to direct them for a while to pick up and to realize this is attainable, we don't need someone to tell us...

1:50: 28 They will figure things out, that these things are possible, create new situation, new environment, new relationship, people just don't know that we have that ability, simple joint forces.

AG: Have you read/ heard of the book, *Power Of Now*?

AB: No, I don't do that, I used to read a lot psychology books the different school of social workers, you have to go thru stuff like that, the problem that I had, I took some course at the university and college no 1 rule, when I went, I started talking to something like this, they told me, I can't talk of philosophy and psychology at the same time, they just don't fit, or they don't approach, they have to teach psychology separately in isolation from philosophy, I asked well what about spirituality, what if I'm inclined to be more of a spiritual person and I have a deeper understanding of the people, looking of the conduct, what really is sort of the underlying is the belief system, how does people figure out life, connecting with all parts of the universe, thinking of spiritual aspect of life, we touched on it basically knowing and understanding it, that is spirituality, once you understand, it is easy for a person for another person to look at life in that way. Our instructor, I kept bringing it up I was not a good fit for the class, he said let's make a deal, I will give you good grade; let's keep philosophy out of our discussion. Of course I compromised,

AG: Oh wow.

AB: That is the way we always go back to our spiritual ways, any psychological dysfunction, individual in our community, first thing is all the person will say, what is wrong with the people that are supposed to be teaching the young people, they were not taught in the right way that it effects the children, what is it that they were to of been taught, when you are a part of a society, you start going thru the teaching of the values of life, that are important the relationship with others, the whole community and yourself, your taught kinship, that all of your fellow members in the society are your brothers and sisters, in the horns society when you get to that level the children of your new brother, are your children too. like your own, you get closer, right from an early age, we use the term, lifelong learning, it was bounced around we use lifelong traditional mentorship. At a early age you are attached, and develop a bond with elders, with grandparents and then elders, the age grade society example pigeons, prairie chicken, brave dogs, as you get older you go to another society, 5 years maybe then a higher lever till you get to horn society. the horn society transferred twice you become a parent, another you become a grandfather, all along, when you first came, pretty soon you will be connected with your own brothers and sisters, and you are all taught the same, to have respect, learn how to care for each other, not to the point to be totally dependent on you. but to help them help themselves, you get a Blackfoot name and the songs and dance, know your place within the community example at the Sundance , your chores and how you relate to other, prepare to move yourself up. All the time.. from the start at, about 18-20, the main objective for your parents is to start to raise you, prepare you for family, for you to be a responsible parent, responsible person that are able to care for spouse and children to be a resourceful person., the thing or beauty of all this, you develop the support system and you look at it today, social development, the child services, other food banks, whatever. These are now trying to fill the void that was struck or destroyed, in the

natural way we grow into, the level increase your knowledge your increase intellect how things work and how they fit together, understanding is important, rather than one, important not to leave behind, you start to learn all of those, and that is why when our visitors come to our, they didn't find schools university or colleges we just grew up in the education system, heavy emphasis on values...to be honest, you have to be honest, if you want people to believe in you and to trust you. You have to be honest. Once you start to you know...dishonest people will avoid you and you will be branded, for the rest of your life, you don't want to be ostracized you want to remain connected...people fear that, to be set aside, people to be set aside, and we furred, that is why we take some much, we are hard on ourselves, to repent to get back on good terms with others, it is very costly, you have to be over generous, over kind, then you redeem yourself it is rewarding at the end. You become part of the group your children are affected, and that is the way we were taught, that is the environment we grew up in, girls and boys were the same, all societies were right, except the...

2:03:33 women's society, the other thing working with red crow college, we realize that we are going thru identity crisis, some of the dysfunction, people didn't know who they are? just because they live in standoff, but didn't understand the...Blackfoot ways, no body taught them, what we have done with redraw our approach with the sacred, it is all Blackfoot specific, we respect other people, take part in other tribes ceremony, but when they come they can't say this is the ways of the *Piikani*, *Kainai*, *Siksika*, they cannot say cause they belong to another tribe, but we respect that because they made the decision to participate,

AG: Like the Sioux?

AB: Yes, but we encourage to know the Blackfoot culture, some feel comfortable to combine, as long as they say it doesn't belong to the Sioux. That is trying to address the identify crisis. *Kaanayii*

AG: Did you want to?

ABW: Ok I will have to sign with an x.

[End of interview.]

## Appendix C

### Carol Murray

To protect the misappropriation of the interviews and Indigenous knowledge, no part of Appendix C of this thesis can be reproduced in any shape or form without the Carol Murray's permission.

#### February 2012

AG: I'm here in Waterton Lakes at the Blackfoot Confederacy with Carol Murray from *Amskapii Piikani* and you're being invited to participate in the study *Aistomatomminkii*: The embodiment of Indigenous prayer as an indigenous framework.... The purpose of this study is to meet the needs of indigenous clients and to meet the need of therapists' helpers to meet the needs of indigenous populations. Mostly it's for our people to embrace, but I have to leave it open, I chose to, and there a lot of therapists out there that share the same compassion for our people that would be open up to some of this information. To meet the needs of the indigenous clients surrounding knowledge of cultural constructs and applications within the diverse processes of healing. To articulate the power of prayer. I want to ask you some questions and we may get into pieces of storytelling and what not.

I have four questions:

1. How does prayer in a Blackfoot traditional form shape our identity?
2. Does prayer reflect instructional value for living? If yes, than how? If no, than how.
3. What does prayer ...and how does Blackfoot spirituality help counselors, serve our ...
4. What does living your life as a ceremony mean?

CM: When we pray, one of the first things we call upon is *iitsipaadiipiiuup* (the giver of life) and my perspective is you have to be happy and be glad to be alive, in order to recognize what *iitsipaadipiiop* is. Because if you ever find yourself in a depression, or traumatized or extremely sad, just because you are a a live being does not mean you are alive. I don't always call upon *iitsii* , there are times I mentally and purposely start my prayer with *iiyuu iitsiipaadipiup* the Giver of Life. Because I wanted to energize myself to be alive, to be living. To be active and movement, both spiritually physically mentally, and so when I call on *ittsii* it's because, not all the time, sometimes when I purposely and intentionally do it.

My children have had some trauma, my son had a traumatic brain injury. Car accident, very serious. So when that happened, he was a child I breastfed 'til 6. Till he went to school. We had a real bond. There was times when I had to ask *iitssii* to get me up, because we took him home with a brain injury, he was about 5 ½ months after his wreck to put him in a rest home, they will take care of him, we were like why? Because he was probably going to pass, the other option was to take him home. In my mind I had to look at it and say, I could put him in a rest home and he will pass away. And the other option was to give him life and so we took him home, and we lived a totally structured routine, he was helpless and could not do anything for himself, but my husband and my older son would drive him to his therapy which is 2 hours away from home, and he would have to be there at 9:00 o'clock in the morning. He went to therapy at 9, 10, and 11 o'clock, and then they would break for lunch from 12 to 1, and that meant my husband and son would have to eat and they'd feed him through the feeding tube, and had to be back at therapy at 1, 2, and 3 o'clock. And then they drove home, I was teaching because I had health insurance. So it's strange what prayer will do, to energize you to do all those things. I think a lot of times you don't see it till afterwards, so then I think of *iitsiibaa*, very deep meaning for me. Then we call it *Napi Naadoosii*, who showed us the way of our life, that's the one that teaches you to get up and make a smudge and to tell the creator what you want. Because it was given to us that way. And we call upon the old Lady *Giipiidaaki*, I do, I call on her. You know you're the one who knows what I'm going through as a woman. Give me whatever it takes to help these people who are asking for prayers for their life, or help me who needs help in my life, or for whoever you know. Just the world in general, we know it's all relation. Then we call on their sun, morning star. For me morning star doesn't say what I mean it to be, morning star is there everyday to start a day. And so as a woman and mother, when you get up and start getting your kids ready, it's like it can just help you, it energizes you. That is who I call on. There are others I call upon. Like the Bundles. Call on the people who are in ceremony. Because I know that they are all trying so hard to help. Help us have a better place. But I guess being more focused to the question. You probably have to restate it for me.

- AG: How prayer shapes, in our Blackfoot form, shapes our identity, but you brought something up about depression and trauma. Those are huge issues for our people. Very much one of the reasons I want to study what we need out of those things to apply to those areas, and of course for myself. Can you talk about that a little bit?
- CM: I think getting back to the first part of your question, is I think that when you start a prayer, like in Catholicism, I learned the father the son and the holy ghost, and I could never relate to what they meant, in the sacred holy Mary. Because I had no relation to them, but after I learned about the Sun, the Moon, and the Morning Star, I could really see my relationship in the universe, I needed that. Because my first teachings were Catholicism and I couldn't figure it out, cause we were taught to be afraid of snakes, the first image, is statue of Mary standing on a snake barefoot. And I think inherently as Blackfoot people we have a sort of a fear of snakes. And it didn't know it then, but as women you always have to sit, if you're



facing the alter, you always sat on the left side of the Alter. Very much like our tipi ceremonies. But at that time no one ever explained to me why she was stepping on the snake, so I had no relationship with the Moon. But with Trauma, I been very gifted in life not to, maybe I lived in a bubble, it wasn't until my son got in a wreck, that trauma was in my every moment of existence. And in every scientific body of information that was being given to me while he was lying there in Acoma, was that he would be a vegetable, that he would pass away soon, there seemed to be absolutely no indication of hope that he would be alive. Which is now, 9 years later. And living in a semi-independent home with a roommate. So the trauma the shock that a person goes through is the prayer, there was absolutely nothing we could do as parents, or me as the mother, based on everything that scientific health knowledge told us to keep him alive. So we went to prayer. And I believe that the only reason my son is alive today, and healing in the capacity he is, is to prayer. When it comes to depression I had a son who would be 36v in June would'a been, passed away 2 years ago, he did not have the capacity to overcome alcoholism, my husband found him dead in his house. We all lived close out there (together). Like a triangle. My husband found him. When I think about depression. You're asking yourself as a parent, as a mother, of all the things I did, or thought I was doing, why is it he couldn't overcome alcohol, and why is it he passed away from it? So I would catch myself being able to sit and do absolutely nothing, and it felt ok. I think it's the same feeling that people call numb. You know, you don't care if you feel, you just sit you know. And I was like that, I remember, I think back to it now, when during his funeral, I could of just sat there, if people didn't put food in front of me I probably wouldn't of eaten or drank. It puts you in a state of Nothing. I think it was depression. And I was like that. I was noticing people were concerned. Not like an everyday how are you. And how do you tell them, oh I'm just numb. Because it doesn't make sense to people who aren't numb. And I would look around and see me daughter, my son with the brain injury, and my other son, and our Grandchildren. And I noticed they would look at me like, we don't want to disturb her but we really want to be by her you know around her. When I started noticing that, I started getting excited that I needed to live again, be alive. But right after the funeral, we cleanse in a Blackfoot ceremony, Blackfoot prayer, we cleanse our spirit. And I remember looking at my family members as they come in. all of a sudden I was needing to pray. We transferred our beaver bundle then, about 3 wks after the funeral. I think that creators the one that did that. This older man came and he was sick with cancer, I'd like to take a bundle for a year. And I knew he was sick, but he never directly told me and I knew that he was going to Great Falls for treatment. So when he wanted to take it, on one hand it was almost like, ok someone else can take care of this. Because I was not sure if I could, in a responsible way. And on the other hand it was like, oh my God, my son's gone away, and now this bundles gonna going away, so it was like double real fast. And I could have looked at it real negative and allow myself to go back (to depression). But all of a sudden this man needed this bundle and needed prayers because all he wanted to do was live for another year. And all of a sudden I though we have to. We have to do it. I was so scared that I couldn't be a responsible Blackfoot woman and do that transfer. It

was among the top hard things, that I wouldn't be able to let go when it was time to let the bundle go. And yet all the people in the ceremony see and have total faith that you are going to be able to perform that ceremony. I said to myself creator put you on this earth now you are going to do, for some reason you will now transfer that bundle, because you were given the right to that transfer and someone is asking for it now. No matter how hard it is that you just lost your son. And it give you a perspective when you put that smudge on and start praying to have the strength the courage and the ability to perform that ceremony, it's like creator brings you alive again, brings you out of ... the word we use, is it makes you feel useful. And it makes you come out of that depression. The ceremony did happen. In relation to depression. And I'm a little unsure of how to make it sound as accurate as I want it to be. I had to continue to help people with their bundle that fall, where my husband had the choice not to be there. And he was in a depression a lot longer, and I think he is just starting to come out of it. Because he didn't have to be there at the ceremonies and pray for people. And I felt like I did. Because Allan is the male. And I'm the female. And I felt that I was given that as a gift from Creator, and I said that right from the very beginning, I said that I would carry it out the best I could. And that's what I noticed. If my husband would have had to sit there, would he have come out of his depression sooner. And he's working real hard to come out of his depression. And I question it, And one of them that I noticed, and I know this wasn't intentional in that way but, Allen started telling people at home, go get John to start running their Beaver bundle Sweat, not that he didn't have to, he was now giving that responsibility to John. So it's a dynamic. In the times before, we unlearned our ways, or our ways were interrupted, everyone prayed. And so we had to keep that bountiful way of life, because it was the creator giving it, the old lady of the moon and all the other spirit beings giving us the energy to keep going no matter what.

- AG: So it's part spiritual influence and part purposeful being purposeful. That both kind of contribute to lowering that depression that or is depression caused by lack of purpose? Or the other way around?
- CM: I think so, over the years that I been participating in our ceremonies there's come to be a lot more. But at one time the majority of the people went to George and Molly Kicking Woman's for their spiritual needs to be met. The whole reservation, one and a half million acres of our reservation. And we use to see people from Canada from all three reserves to come to their ceremonies. And you think if all the grammas n grampas, moms n dads, all the sisters and cousins. And all got up in the morning and said hey sister, can you make a smudge and pray for me you know all of a sudden that sisters purpose becomes much more meaningful. In life. To me I didn't see it so much as the family connection as I see it as a tribal connection. So when we talk about trauma and depression, it hits so hard. And you having just lost your mother, know how hard it hits when you give that person a purpose, they are going to have to come out of their trauma and depression.
- AG: Maybe that's why I ran for council?

- CM: Yes, see all of a sudden you need to do more. Need to do more, because you have more to give. And when mom was there you didn't need to give that, cause that was your mom's role.
- AG: Yes she was very much in the community for me.
- CM: I used to hear the elders say, never disregard the age, or the persons way of life, cause you never know what they have. That saying has a different meaning, to me it means if you give them purpose to care for you or a bigger group, they have it. Everybody has it, just need to be called on it. And that's the other thing we struggle with sometimes and other people say well they wont step forward, or to say come over here I'll pray for you. No true, no one does that. How do we get our people who, instead of telling somebody, ohhh, just let them drink because they are depressed. Why don't we go to that person and say can you pray for us? And would that take them out of their alcoholic depression.
- AG: And that is one of the things I've been told about Blackfoot ways is we don't go converting people you have to go forward yourself as an individual...you have to want it first. Have to seek it, not to be pushed on you.
- CM: I've given some thought. Is that reactionary to colonization or is that truly what it was like? If you think back 150 years ago before you were even born the camp was already praying, so you came into a life of prayer, so there is no other way of thinking. But when you are born into colonization, or you're born into a depressive home, or your born into a traumatic lifestyle, to even think that we could have a community of Prayer life, is almost, ooohhh that feels too good.
- AG: Feels too unrealistic at this stage.
- CM: Yes at this stage. I think one of a friend of mine, she came to my house, they taking a beaver bundle on October 15, she said you know your son the 36 year old, I couldn't believe what you gave to your kids. And I got self-conscious cause I didn't know what she was going to say, and she gave the example, we were all at church, Buck was sitting and he said to her, these people all come in and sit down, and they say their prayer, and they don't smudge. And she said, did you realize that is what you gave to your kids? I said no, they must of just caught on, both my husband and I smudge. Either way they were going to get it . . . so I think that the other things when it comes to trauma, the baker massacre of the Blackfoot people. When my professor had me write about it, I had no idea what he was talking about. At first my husband and two older kids, and I have one picture by the Maria, I was pregnant. At First I just wanted to know what happened here. In 1992 I was hired as president of Blackfeet Community College. And somehow other things were coming to me about that event, and I became drawn to wanting to know what happened. And how did it affect us as Blackfoot people. That year I said everyone is going down to Marias river on January 23, and we are supposed to be an educational institute, higher educational institute, in this community. And someone comes to you asking you what the Baker Massacre is, and you don't

know and much less you don't even know what happened. .... That is not the role we need to be playing if we are supposedly the higher educational institute. So we all went that year. And if anyone did not go, to this day I don't know. [laughing] It helped me to have other people explain to me what happened to them. Which is what I had been going through all the time. But I could not quite, because it would have been me then this is what happens to you. We brought people down there who had never been there in their life, never even heard of it, cause we kinda had like a seminar at the college for the historic background. And we had people sayin', I don't know what was happened, I was standing there and I was crying, I don't know why I was crying, then when we got home that day and I was asking myself why was I crying and why do I feel better. From 1992 till this year is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary that the college has been going down there. And what I discovered out of that, when that incident happened in 1870, some people maybe all the people did not take the time to resolve that issue within us as a tribal people. Because the survivors are all who we are today. We all have some strand of connection to them. My husband and I talk about what it has done and there is people who have shared with us that they were told never to speak of it ever. As a matter of fact one of my first interviews was my Grandfather's older sister, and there she didn't even trust, bet 1970-80 that I interviewed her, and when we went to her house the first thing she said is I'm not going to come and talk about it because the bulls will come and get me. And this is over 100 years later and she wasn't even there. So trauma itself in itself may be founded in some of those incidences that we don't know about. Because when my professor told me to write about the Baker Massacre, I didn't even know what he was talking about. Since over this 20 year experience at the college, I been going a lot longer, now people are revealing the pieces of history and having to deal with real reality. Just like now I can't remember if it was 78 or 80, that's what trauma does to you. It erases your confidence. someone say native people's confidence is so damaged in multiple occasions, and it is very difficult to just go back and pinpoint that one incident. It wasn't until my son wrecked that I began to kind of compensate, and say I can't remember. But before I was adamant, lemme think, and be able to pinpoint. But all of a sudden the memory starts to be numbed. So I think the trauma we had as native people happened so fast with such intensity in the mid to late 1800s and early 1900s but we were so numbed by then, probably just living moving organisms.

AG: Our residential school eras ended in the 60s and that was very horrific traumas.

CM: When I first started hearing about it. God we had a mission right on our reservation called the holy family. And in our community it was silence. When asked they would not talk about it. And it is still that way. Some people can recall the good moments, but are totally silent about the not good moments. I noticed. And don't know if it is unique to natives. And over the years trying to be conscious of our community behaviors. And how I got conscious is my husband and I got a a low rent houses. Was listening to our chief and we just got a new six-plex, and six new families are gonna move in. And that was how it was for us in 1975, they finished these little rent houses. And I remember moving in, and I

didn't live like that, I didn't grow up living like that, we had wood stove, and we carried water from the creek, and an outside toilet. But the house we lived in with my mom was a three bedroom I come from a family of 10. I think two or three of the older ones weren't living there but everyone else was. And so I seen education as a possible way to be able to of take care of myself. By then I had two children, I did everything I knew how to do to get back into school. And that is how the baker massacre became a big deal for me, being educated made me so much more aware, of just perception, it made me feel more, I wasn't numbed. So I'm thinking about how that transition went, by 1982 I finished my Bachelor and my Associate degree. Thanks to my sister her husband, and my husband took care of the kids while I went to school evenings and weekends trying to get it done, had to go summer school for one more class. Seems funny now, but now it was trauma,, never learned to swim. And the last class I took was swimming. Finished mid-July and went to work at Blackfeet community college oct 15 1982. And I figured out what it took, how to take a course of study and make it fit to make you able to work somewhere. That was the whole jist of it. And that's what I did. So when students come in, I was married two children, and it was my first job, and I look at these people and they were just as naïve as I was. And I decided I better go back and go to school and have some hope anyway. And so over the years from 1982 in 1986 I became the dean of students. And try to not be shamed to have hope for a better life, but they would only do it individually, not as a group, never publicly, and in a closed office they say "this is what I want, don't tell anybody". So I listened to that, until I became president, I decided to do whatever it takes to help this community have a better life. And all my meetings started with a smudge, even today in my mind. I look back on it and people would say this would have never happened if you hadn't of done this. I remember when the college started. And the only thing I contribute it to is the smudge. I remember having lists. Whenever I think of something that needed be done, and put it on the list. And we would just go down the list. And to me that was how we were going to change the mass feeling in the community. And it's not that it's...Cause it's not the native peoples community grows so fast. But my goal at that time was at least one person in every family attends the college. And I attribute it to the smudge and the lists.

AG: What do you mean attributed it to the smudge?

CM: We had an administrative meeting. Every morning at 9 a.m., like clockwork. And we had the smudge box, by husband made it and I made sure it was a big part of the administration. He made sure the dirt and stuff was there. We had a hot plate, burn cottonwood, and make smudge back then. whether or not they prayed or thought I was a knit wit or what, it didn't matter, no one ever said anything, because that was to me the thing that if creator heard us, then it would happen. We even did student support, 'holiday dinners'. To bring families on campus, so that jealousy and community shame of accepting an education is a possible way of having hope in our community, and so we would put on a big thanksgiving dinner, and start out, and we would see some girl with her husband standing in line, and next thing grandma and grampa there, I remember one time we would

have 500 people in line, and we would have enough food. That's how I dealt with the masses, the explosion that was happening. I did see a couple people Like one time I seen a girl on the roof of her car getting beat up by her boyfriend because he was quite sure she had a boyfriend and that that's why she wanted to go to class. Another time a girl was getting banged off the wall from the classroom buildings, had to take everyone from in the messed up community for consideration for support services. I think it was the confidence of that smudge, why we would do things that people would probably think oh my god, she thinks she can conquer the world.

AG: You mentioned in trauma, it can take the confidence away from our memory therefore ourself, than you sit with the smudge it gave it back. That's a really nice way you're brought these two things full circle.

CM: Even though today, you know when we had a bundle, you smudged in the morning, and then you smudged in the evening and you can smudge any other time you want to, middle of the night or whatever, but at a minimum requirement that's what we were told. That's when we pray for the people. That's what we do, but sometimes now if I get up, and I have just a slight feeling of insecurity, just a premonition of not , go and I make a sage, and then I leave it right there and then I just go. And the confidence allows you a freedom.

AG: Right, that you can get through anything?

CM: Anything, and whatever is going to be is not is going to be taken care of and it's not gonna be anything that will take away from the good. But I've kinda lived my life like that for so long, and , to be honest about one thing that I probably never said to anybody, confidence I never thought I displayed it wasn't probably about until the last few years people say oh don't worry about her she can handle it, and they say it loud enough where I here, and where I really remember is when my son passed away cause that could have been an excuse for me to do absolutely anything irresponsible, because I could 'a used that as a breaking point. Had that old man not wanted that bundle to live just one more year. That's all he wanted. Just before we came in here for the interview he went walking by.

AG: Oh wow...

CM: And it's his bundle that's gonna be transferred after two years.

AG: Wow wow.

CM: But it's not an ego thing, I think sometimes Indian people and description are confused and ego and spiritual happiness I think their confusing the two that if you get too happy and excited they think it's your ego and but in reality it is a spiritual happiness, it's so internal you can't hold it in if you wanted to. You know like when those spirits, just like today when I seen you. I just immediately started waving because your spirit was projecting openness, and when I seen it

and then I laughed after cause I was thinking gee just kinda walking around waving and I just cause I had just gotten here. [laughing]

I think that's a part of colonization the confusion of ego and spiritual happy expression, because if you ever see someone doing well, in our communities, and if they're doing too well, and they look too happy, you'll start to see negative comments directed toward them. To pull that away. And what we should be doing is admiring the spiritual happiness that is projecting out of that person. To make our society advance another level what we don't know yet. But if more people do that then...it's probably there waiting. And so that's kind of the extreme for me with depression. When I can see somebodies spiritual happiness being exposed I get happy not critical of them.

AG: That's really interesting, it makes a lot of sense, I like that, that you said it's there waiting for us, that's very hopeful, that's very good to hear.

CM: Like some of the ladies even in ceremony, I think we came through a real critical time, over in the states of we have repatriation so we were able to bring all those bundles from the museums, n wherever they were. And so when the ladies were coming to me "pray for me pray for me," and I really understood they were asking for help, but lately there are times now, and like I say where that's waiting for us, I catch myself now saying be sure and pray for me today. Going back to that. Take it to the new level. Where most of us should be striving to, you know and I know we will get there. I know we'll get there, I think I'll still be very much alive when we get there. Because just what you see going on there was a time when we would sit in a crown much like we did today, and we wouldn't be allowed to think any different than what was being said to us by the ... you know it wouldn't be ok for us to say well...you your kinda right but on the other hand there is this possibility, well we have that freedom, we are getting it in our heads and our spirit is becoming like, craving for more , because you know how a lot of our people are pushing for that. so I think you know when we talk about our purpose in relationship, one time when I was president of the College, 1996. I never knew depression, and if I did, I didn't know it was depression, up till then. You know in July it's warm, it's the only time it's warm. [laughing] Anyway, I got up and put on my winter coat, it was ugly, but you know it wasn't anything to be proud of, and I put it on it was cold, and I'll never forget everything was a grey color, everything in my house, you know I lived in a beautiful house, I live by two medicine valley , and it is beautiful. Everything was that shape, even that had a shine, that it did not shine, and it was personal depression, and I remember looking around thinking oh my gosh, what happened, everything is just grey, and I sat down on my couch, my couch used to be a flowered kinda yellow orange, and I looked at it and it was grey too. And I sat down, and it was an indication to me that I had to expand my thinking to survive in the world. That's to me, if I have to ever go back to a depression, that was the lesson for me. That I could've stayed in that state of grey, if I chose to just keep my mind there. That fall, I took my first beaver bundle, let's see how did that go...my years...anyway, within 12 months, I had taken my first beaver bundle, my first horn bundle.

AG: Wow o wow, that was the shift.

CM: That was the shift, but it was a personal thing that was going on with me, why I was going through a depression, I was so publicly, not publically, that's kind of accurate, but it's not...I had finally hit the very pit of my value system, being questioned, that's...

AG: Yep that's right, that's a very good description of it.

CM: Yes and from there...

AG: And the reason when you said that, I very much feel that now, that's where I'm at, and why I feel drawn to making some kind of commitment, kind of self-policing. Cause we look around us and see loss of values, and try and stay strong in our principles and ethics, values like you said, in a crazy world we live in, it's hard, that's when I spoke of that discipline, most difficult.

CM: Yes, and I have not said that to anyone, so that's exclusive to your interview. I've told people that I've seen the world grey, but I did not tell them it was the pit of my value system, and went in a different direction from there, and I would have been like anybody else.

AG: Well thank god.

CM: It was a hard one,. I had defied my entire family, to try to make something work, and then the person I tried to make everything work for defied me to my very core of my value system, and that was my husband and so I thought well, you know but everything up to this point, and should I continue or should I quit. . . then, it was my choice, up to that point I think I was...as a wife, but then after that everything was my choice, you know a lot of my confidence has come from ceremony, not saying I know a whole bunch or do a whole bunch but if creator guides your life, you know go there. And then no matter what kinda criticisms I was to take, you know whatever I did, I was not afraid anymore, I was not afraid to talk to other males. Because up to that point, when you're a woman and you're getting successful, and you don't think that your spouse has things going on in their mind. , and I later I call it that grey day, I realize that I was trying to react to his lack of, of confidence or lack of whatever, I wasn't, it was taking me over here away from my own being, well I recognized that that day, I thought this is just a bunch of crap. You know. And I'm not a male female chauvinist type, but I've come to know , that you may be married, you may be in a relationship, but you are always an individual, it took me to that point to recognize that. Because from 1972 to 1996, I had let some of that eat away. It happens right? So, to me, I never viewed myself as being physically attractive or fun crazy person to be around, except within my own family. Within my own family I could come in and just, have everybody laughing. In my immediate family circle. But I guess I that I defied all them there to take up this individual who I had married. Then all of a sudden in ceremony you have a bigger family , a huge family and I become me, I



become ... I knew was all that time being cautioned, limited. And I think prayer is endless, it has endless fruit?

AG: So in terms of the identity, that's a very different concept that I've heard, I've only interviewed males at this point.

CM: And they like it.

AG: But at least general, I think women are so much more and confident and brave, to express vulnerabilities and to share those things whereas men will keep a safe distance from those things . but when you talk about shaping identity like what this prayer did, I'm thinking the whole self-esteem concept is very amazing, the personal empowerment, security of spirituality of protection, the will power, like you said women can charge through anything, it has a lot on the individual level not just the, cause we think of prayers as altruistic, for everybody else, especially in these ceremonies where its big concepts its big deals like cancer , somebodies need. Vow. Like you said the more you get to earn, or given, the more value others may place with you. Or your values may be increased, I don't know if that's the right way to say, it's a sense of respect, respect from others, would that be safe to say. Respect, self-respect.

CM: Because, and you probably understand this better than I do, but I'm only talking about myself, but I've seen insecurity dealt at me across the room at ceremony, from other women.

AG: I hear you there, I've seen it communization.

CM: I told Harry one time, I don't understand, he said don't say anything, he says ssh. So I've seen, one of the people I have to go back to is Max? from the Sundance? The old man. He knew I didn't speak Blackfoot, he probably knew a lot about me, but none of it mattered. He grew up on upper big badger and I grew up on lower big badger and he wasn't when I was just a kid, he was younger than my grandfather, but it was when he'd look at me, and he teach me something, ...I never got that feeling and it was always, he's teaching me this, and I'm learning. On his part there was never any set back it was just go, not doubt, and I remember that from him, and then after he passed away, Leonard had a bundle and I helped transfer that, actually when Allan and Charlene got their first Bundle, Mike and Beverly were there, but Beverly that's when she gave him the right to Transfer Bundles. And then after Mike passed on, than whenever the people would ask Allan, then he would ask me to help him, and I didn't know Allan, I only see him at ceremonies, but when he asked me, it was the same way that Mike had taught me, I would think this is so interesting, I didn't know if he was old, young, I just did not know him. So when you talk about identity, of course a home we have the middle school , or the jur like high school age talk, they'd say why are you doing that with Allan, where's his wife. So identity, and I had to really ask myself, ok why did I have to work with Mike the old man, and now with Allan. And when I

would hear sneaky things going on. I'd be like hmm I don't know, I can't even speak Blackfoot. [laughing]

AG: Something way different than what they thinking. [laughing]

CM: And I'd think, well here is the other part. The college is a big part of my life, and the mission statement says "To Advance the Educational opportunities of our community...and most importantly to preserve and perpetuate the culture". And I never forgot that ever, and when something like that would happen to me I'd think "to preserve and perpetuate the Culture," I was the president of the College and I was learning ceremony at the same time, What an Education! Cause even when I was being confronted on the presidential role, I could count simultaneously being confronted on the ceremony, had some outspoken a Blackfoot speaking woman stood up and said why aren't you asking me, and asking her, she don't know nothing she don't nothing! Not to say it didn't happen, but I knew I had to know our way of life, and I took it that serious.

AG: Yes that's an inherent right.

CM: After all this is done, and when Allan had his heart attack a few years ago, I always remember getting a phone call, I always remember getting a phone call, hey did you hear about Allan Pard, he had a heart attack, and I said really, and that was the first time I started questioning how old he was. Cause I was like, I wonder how old he is.

So anyway, that's when I begin to realize that, I had opened bundles with Leonard Bastien, Butch?, Mike, Allan, Paul?

AG: So what's coming up for me, it seems that the teachings for our males are abundant. there is so many men teaching and mentoring, when it comes to woman, I find from my personal experience, I find there is limitations. There is the *mootookiiks*. I call it the Blackfoot Orthodox, with the strict rigid systems, and then there's those who kinda different cultural differences, mixed with Lakota, Sioux, Cree, there is a difficulty finding those female mentors. When you're looking. And because when you do attend certain things, I remember going to a bundle opening, and feeling very much not wanted there by the woman, by women in the second tipi, and women in the primary tipi.

CM: Wow.

AG: Feeling like something was going on that I didn't know. Or was it because I was on council and we made decisions. Or was it because somebody was jealous because I was there. You know all those things that go on and insecurities. I think this may lead to something interesting. I find I get frustrated. And like you said, you don't speak Blackfoot but your heart is there, the your spiritual voice is there. And I feel the same way and it's going to take me. Blackfoot is one of the hardest language to learn, for me to sit there today in confederacy and listen to straight Blackfoot and try and pick out a word here and there, I feel so ignorant I guess.

But how would this confidence building process you mentioned within ceremony within prayer. Is this a way to mend our women, so our women can unify and build on that side of things? I do feel there are gender differences within these self-esteem concepts, within healing, within ceremony obviously. And I think we have a lot of work to do there.

CM: I seen it like when the beaver bundle ceremony, and I watch when people are coming in, as soon as I see someone start to get rude, I'll purposely call attention to not them directly not to embarrass them or anything but to ease the discomfort that has been created real quick, because it happens just like...it's not even sometimes it's not words it's movement, and ya, I hear what you're saying because it's something like, like how do you have a discussion with...like over there in Browning, ..but I shouldn't say, it's a big generalization. [laughing] So the people that I really know close, they don't do that to anybody. But when I was first introduced to ceremony over there. Oh my God, you know, the colonized expressions that were being used, I wouldn't have called it that at that time but over the years I figured out what it was. I was like oh no, I been here twice you haven't been here yet. I'm more important because I had a bundle once, I sit here, you sit over there, I witnessed all of that, and as a matter of fact, I don't even think they know what they are doing when they do that. I was up here a couple years ago, helping transfer a medicine thunder pipe, and this lady was there and it was like, how do you say it, you see the fridgual Tear of our ceremony, and it was happening that day and you could see it, because that person had been catered to, to do this all? because of the frugality that was going on in life. And very humble that day, very, you know, just do, I was ok, ok, I was listening and I was like the outsider from Browning. I have peripheral, I really highly developed that, I can be looking down and watching what's going on, and I was watching this lady, all I came back was somewhere to a ceremony ok, and she was just barking and striking orders, and putting people in there you've only been here two times, or you haven't been here once or none. And I was like, how is this happening? How, here's what I was thinking. The old ladies were sitting here who had been formal bundle holders, I was sitting here, and these thunder pipe women were all sitting here and not one of them not one of them would take on that behavior, and they were allowing it, and I had thought, if I was sitting up there, and not here I would have taken that on. None of them would. But in a way, to say are you ok today, you know just relax everything is gonna go good. I would have taken that on and that way...but they just went silent, those other thunder pipe bundle holders, they just went silent. And I was like, knowing Allan like I know him, like if it don't stop, he's gonna say something. Cause we just had ceremony, and in that sense what gets him in trouble too. But on the other hand it brings attention to it, probably not the way the people would want it, but that's his strictness. So I hear what you're saying about...I think a lot of people are being scared off. Because of that. By being shamed out, being humiliated out, they are being um...I remember the first time I went into a ceremony at George and Molly Kicking Woman and these women really stuck with me through the whole thing, they gave me a piece of candy or something, and even if I didn't want it I would take it, just because they were showing generosity and I stuck it in my mouth and they all gasped and I

went what's wrong and they said you are not supposed to eat until they have their feed. And they just did little things to me all day, and so that was my introduction to ceremony. [laughing]

AG: It reminds me of gangs, you get beaten and initiated to weed out the weak, and it's almost like that like reminiscent of residential schools how you had to be really tough, my mom would tell me we had to turn off our feelings, we had to turn off our emotions to survive. I remember her talking about that, and looking back, and the bullying that came out of those schools. That's what we call it as young people. Ooh acting residential, acting boarding school, that's boarding school right there! And we'll point it out, some of our younger employees, will get mad because people are too aggressive, and they want them to be more humane. And we're told at ceremonies we don't bring up negative things, we don't bring up negative thoughts, we're not supposed to talk about that, can't gossip, it's for good, but then what's being shown at times really contradicts that. And like you said they don't even know that they're doing it. But it impacts.

CM: But where are those teachers?

AG: Yes.

CM: Where are the elders, where are the ones, like you said who do you go to? Because you may want to go to this person and then the next ceremony you are like whoa blow me away.

AG: And that's why I have a hard time finding people to go to, that I fully respect. And maybe my standards are too high.

CM: ...

AG: Tell that to my ex, [laughing], but I think I want someone who walks the line, if your gonna pray *giimaapiisiiniik*, compassion kindness, well I wanna see it, cause I'm gonna give you that, and I would like that back.

CM: What I don't understand when it's being don in a ceremony, it's totally having an effect on the healing, on the growth of our people, it's hindering all of that.

AG: It is, it is. That was going to be my first thesis.

CM: I don't know if our people are really there yet, and because of all the time even women who are much older than me, probably the next generation, after they get confident in you, you'll hear their confidence? And the first time that happened to me, I thought what is going on here. And that's why where in the times of conversation I describe the time that's waiting for us. Because that's where I thought those ladies should be going, and they swung back here to the familiar. And that really bothered me, and I'm not saying that I'm so great all the time, because you know I probably have my bad moments, I hope not too many. But I had to work at it, I work at it too because I've received so many gifts from being

in ceremony. that my husband will attest to this, we used to drive across that flat going from standoff to from Cardston, that straight away, you can see chief mountain, and I remember that feeling and I been on that road so many times and I would think gee, I wish so many people could see this, it's so good, Sooo...everything's gonna be ok, you know. Everything is ok, everything is good.

AG: Tell me about that feeling, that's important.

CM: It's like I know where to seek help when I need it, that feeling it's just like, your happy calm, peaceful, the world physically looks different in a sense of the beauty that's just all there. You don't see...you know I'm realistic, I don't see, you know the fence is probably torn down, the trash was on the fence or whatever, but you actually get into another realm of this is how the beauty, you do see the beauty, the big picture, and I so wanted that for so many people, and I guess when I told you earlier I wanted at least one person from every home to attend college, that's how I wanted everybody, not one out of everybody, everyone to have that feeling.

AG: That's Love, that's loving your people.

CM: And I said to my husband, he said I'm driving a 100 miles an hour he used to say I drive Miss Daisy around. [laughing] I'll be just driving she's out there waiting.

Both ....[laughing]

AG: Something came to mind was safety.

CM: It was, it don't matter what federal policy, it don't matter if they give us \$2500 for this or \$5 million for this, it feels good.

AG: We are going to be ok!

CM: Yes, and you know what? We can have that. Yes we need this other stuff, but it don't quite take all that. I don't know if I can really get that description yet.

AG: In addictions there is that concept of surrendering I guess, I gave a friend a description, when somebody is either going to quit their job, or they make a decision that eases their pain or their life, there's a little bit of euphoria, because that's going to go away, or the surrendering component. I met my bottom it can't get worse than this. But not in a negative concept, it's all up hill from here, I've gone through hell and back, there's that's safety.

CM: Or the Grey, knowing you can stay away from a pit of grey if you want.

AG: That's a really important concept from what we are talking about and what I'm seeking clarity I guess it's about articulating, what's so great about prayer in our ways and I guess that's a major point you just said. That it is that *Sense*. And maybe we'll have more conversation on what that means, or is there a Blackfoot

concept word that might describe it? We'll have to look into that. But just to think about, there is a sense of transcendence.

CM: Yes there is, because it's like I can remember driving, or riding, across the looking and as I can, my immediate brothers and sisters we were in a big family, about the time I was going into ceremony, my family was into a big drug issue, two of my sisters being indicted for drug dealing, and so simultaneously this is going on, and I remember one time thinking and riding, and I know what happens and everyone will be ok. And I remember that feeling so I didn't get way down emotional, but I was feeling sorry for their children. I was like when they go away what does that mean, neglected children, and are their safety needs being met. And now one did go for four years. So it's not like living in a balloon.... You know and just life in general. But I think when we are going and looking at prayer, and ill share this as my example of a different way than I think I looked at it. I had two aunts and they join a different religion, and when they run into you they would put their hands on you and start praying, and talking words that I never heard in my life, and I wouldn't understand these words coming from them or what they are saying, and their words are just rolling out of their tongues, and they would touching your head, your arms, and how they are going to save you. And I remember they happening in my mom's house, and I thought to myself well this is prayer, I'll take it in... and I was a bit distracted by the behavior, and my younger sisters started complaining, and they said I don't like it when they come and tell us how bad we are, and how they have to save us, you know, I thought they have every right to say this because this is their home, but why isn't my mom standing up and say this is my ?, who was the older sister, but it took me a while to seek out, what I think what I finally come to terms with is my mom had been raised as a catholic, but she had seen ceremony in her childhood, because the old lady from the buffalo days raised her grandpa who was in her own, so she seen Elders but then she was raised a catholic. And when we went to church, she used to put at Easter and I think Christmas eve, ? ..just with my mom they'd go in the church and she would fix up all of us, and we'd sit, and the priest would be so mean. And her and I have really gotten along, especially in the last maybe, we and we took up our beaver bundle she would just cook up, cook lots of food and bring it to the ceremony, god she'd just pick up the back of her car and people would have to start hauling stuff, and the people would comment and say oh my goodness your mom must 'a been just busy cooking. She's 80 now. Now that I've become more of an adult woman she shares with me her intellect feelings that were challenged by the priest, when he would stand up there she felt like he was staring directly at her, making fun that she had all these children sitting beside her in church. More or less like a sexual attack, and whereas in Blackfoot ceremony when people see who you are and you see a woman or a pregnant woman, you start praying for them. But after visiting with my mom, she felt like the priest, she finally had the time and energy to haul us off to church and to be acceptable. I don't know if you remember this , but in our early, we were poor, when people talk about hillbillies, and people talk about hillbillies, we had shoes, don't know if we had shoes.

AG: Yes that's how my mom was.

CM: But anyway when we went to church we must a been all clothed and something, but she felt the priest attacking her. He was able to get into her soul in to her heart. But then when she start coming to the ceremonies, she'd be laughing. Just like the other day, I was listening to her and we did this mock Buffalo drive, at the college we had all the middle school kids come down, we had been planning for about 6 weeks anyway hey, let's have a Buffalo drive, let's do a buffalo drive, the whole community, we got into our dream state. And what was amazing, so the middle school come down full force teachers and all, they started it last year on historical trauma, and the healing we had a Blackfoot PhD in psychology Joe Stone do a talk on historical trauma, with 220 kids speaking, this year we decided to have *amovk* buffalo jump. There is this teacher at middle school, he's always gung ho full of energy, he said I would like to take responsibility for that after we dreamed it up and thought it, and we said yes Jim you can have it, because we knew he would, because you can just see it in him it's like he came alive, and another teacher was like yea well do that, and we were like ok go ahead and if you need any help, and I was like how many people can we get buffalo robes from,. We need at least 20 buffalo *iinii*, and will be a big deal if we get less than 20. Get all this excitement going. So last Wednesday they came and stomped down all the grass down, the whole middle school, 249 kids, stomped all the grass down. Some of them where they would have been behind the rock carons and some of them with branches and of course I think there was more than 20 buffalo robes, and there were two kids per robe, but I'll tell you I guess if something made me happy and my mom's 80 now, is that she got to see a buffalo run. She was laughing and just like she referred it to being a child she was so happy so excited. She was driving and I was sitting here and my friend was in the back seat, and we were in this valley they were doing it up here, and I'll tell you inherently we have things, and those hills were kind of like rolling. The people in the camp were all standing here and all the different people were , and they had the two buffalo runners, and those two buffalo runners started out, and one started chasing from the back, on this little rolling hill right here, those buffalo were like behind here, and just naturally when two people are moving and they have that effect,, and as they started to come up that hill they looked like real buffalo. My god, that was so cool, and those two buffalo runners were running in the front, and then the big camp started chasing from back, and those ones on the sides would appear with their branches, and to listen to my mom laugh, I thought I attributed to ceremony, I thought if I haven't given anything to my mom in her life, I had given her this gift of pure laughter today, and it would'a been a ceremony back in the day. Because we would'a all been making smudge praying, for the buffalo, for the safely of the people, for everything, praying for the bounty of life. And she was just being so silly that even toward the end I was like, it ain't real we just mocked this up mom, but she was so happy, she just didn't get over it, she just wanted to get in her pick up and drive across and be right there, so of course we had to drive over there. And she just jumped out of her truck and she was so excited. And I was enjoying her happiness; it was like it was spilling out, reaping it. It was because of ceremony we had become such good friends, it was because of prayer.

And we were not that close before, I was kinda like my dad's... I have an older brother and sister, and mom had to raise them for a while, while my dad had settled down, and then came me, so I'm a reminder of that. And so we dint really have that, and my dad passed away in 1973, and I had my first daughter in 74' she was just a few months old when he passed away. So after that I kinda took my life over here. So I kinda hit that depression because I really didn't want to admit that I maybe I made a few wrong decisions. Both talking. So see that was our way of life and like today, I guess the similarities in differences in that the buffalo hunt, we get up in the morning and we pray, whether we go outside and we pray. And we see Morning Star if it's early, or the suns already coming, or the moons still up, it would be that same essence of the buffalo, we are going out to take care of our people. And some people have a real struggle with people being rich, whatever that means. People making good money, I have no problem with it, because I know Indian people share it. Whether it's whatever, no matter how big our income, we share it.

AG: That's so true

CM: And no matter how little our income we share it, it wasn't I went to school for teaching, I taught for three and a half years, and this beginning teacher with two children, god she was just young, I must'a been about 47, and she was just brand new out of college with two children. Her and I were kinda co-teachers. One day she was visiting, and she was trying to get familiar with our community, because she wasn't from our community, she wasn't even native. but browning has a high pay scale compared to other public schools, so we get a lot of teachers trying to pay off their student loans. But anyway, she taught me something that I never knew, that no matter how much \$ they make or don't make, they have over \$3000 in the bank savings at all times. And I looked at her and I was like "what for?" ...if I had that much I'd go to a ceremony! And she looked at me and said, in case my transmission goes up, or the motor in my car. She said I always make sure I have transportation to work. Wow, and I was like holy smokes, I didn't think it was a bad value at all, it was actually good, but it was something I never knew. You know.

AG: Yea to put it all like that.

CM: and she just said it straight out. Once in a great while I go to Helena and I run into her. Last time I was there, she works at...Dillard's the mall, I was going up and down that isle, and she was like hey carol hey carol...and because she didn't know I had gone through hard times, .. actually about two years after my son wreck...and I look at her and was so happy, and she was smiling and just like a blessing that.. but I looked at her and for the life of me I couldn't remember her name, and she was calling me by name and I was like oh my god, and finally got over there she gave me a big ol hug and I hugged her, and said was you been doing, and I said I been doing ok, I'm just kinda hanging out tonight, and she's like you remember me? Ronnie? And just like that I was Oh yeah! Ok, Ronnie Grahm. And I thought this is the lady who taught me the lesson, you take care of



yourselves and just like today we have to figure out what that means. Because that doesn't necessarily mean the same as the Buffalo Hunt of the Past. Although you could do a comparative understanding to redefine in today terms. You know.

- AG: Academically speaking? Do a comparative analysis between savings and your bank account and the buffalo hunt! [both laughing] That's a good point, I'd like to I think that's something very applicable here. About what you said redefining how you take care of yourself.
- CM: You know what I noticed today in those speeches over there, see I can never just listen...and my husband was a philosophy major, ok so you gotta remember while I was working at the college he was going to college to be in philosophy, and he would twist my head this way, and twist my head that way. And try and make me see things in a different way, whether I wanted to or not. [both laughing] And I would always feel like he was projecting it to me. Like, Carol you need to think about how you say this, and out of all the presentations I heard today, and I begin to wonder if when we go from speaking Blackfoot to learning English that we know such limited connectors. That we only have so many and we are misrepresenting what we are meaning?
- AG: Oh ya, lost in translation?
- CM: Because the one that I'm really big on and I do it ,and I'm trying to figure out how to do it so I don't offend people, but somebody will say, well we could go over here or we could go over there, and I will say, I think we can do both. We can do this, and we can do that, because from having him drill by head with so much philosophical thinking, I tend to think that we have to give up one thing to have another. And we don't. And so but to my friends, whenever I travel with them which is not too often, but when we do, we always eat desert first, just for that reason.
- AG: You always eat desert first?
- CM: mmmm. And I'm the one I said while I was looking at the menu, I really want some pie, and I listened to them huh, and they said oh I do too, oh I do too, but what am I going to eat first? And I said why do you have to eat your other food first, why don't you have your desert first? You want that the most don't you? [both laughing]
- AG: Are they gonna, are we going to be going back to the four wives and husband concept. I agree.
- CM: Just recently one of them travelled with their two sons, ones in high school rodeo, oh we went somewhere to rodeo, and we went to eat and ordered desert first. And she said they both looked at me and said "mom!! you know better than that", and I said what do I know better, and they said, you know you're supposed to eat your food before you eat your desert! And she said "oh no, Carol Murray taught me, if

you want your desert you eat your desert first and then you eat your food.”  
Because why do we have to self-punish ourselves?

AG: And who’s ritual is that anyways, your treat, once you’ve earned it.

CM: Ya, like ring that bell.

Both [laughing]

AG: Exactly. I do use that concept at times, like who’s ritual is that anyways? It isn’t our way and...

CM: I think that’s why , and then I seen it and I almost bought it, but I didn’t , but we were going to Missoula last Friday, and stopped at a little shop with unique stuff and on there is these little metal things on the wall, and there’s this one that says, “Life’s short, eat your desert first.”

AG: [laughing] Wow you found it, that’s amazing.

CM: If they had two of them I would have given it to each of them and they only had one, and maybe that’s why I didn’t.

AG: Just keep it for yourself.

CM: On my fridge. [both laughing]

AG: The summer before last, I got invited to go present with Native students across Canada on their research in Vancouver BC. I remember listening to this one lady, she said something about our native languages are so full of emotion, intellect, spirituality, physicality, everything, they are so full, that we need the highest English language to describe simple concepts ... because we just are like what they break down, like you said today those speakers. It’s so big in Blackfoot, it’s so spiritually, and emotionally involved, and when it comes to English it’s kinda like a downer. It’s kinda like well yea that’s good, I’m sure it was really something else.

CM: You can even see it in their body presentation.

AG: Oh yeah, And the listeners, the audience. Oh yea I saw that a lot. It was pretty nice and was thinking man, even though I don’t know what they are saying I love it , it’s good , it’s nurturing, I would at least get something you know, and it was motivation to learn. I was thinking ok, I’m going to ask aunty Kathleen to come tutor us once a week, I’ll cook her supper. [both laughing]

CM: Yes exactly.

AM: Try and get those little ways of sneaking in. I do understand what you mean about that. It brings me back to language is huge for identity I think.

- CM: Oh it's a huge one.
- AG: I knew with that border, it has so much damage to our people. And you guys have suffered excruciatingly, language wise because of this imaginary line that severed our families.
- CM: I know Yes.
- AG: Severed our connections, as much as we try to keep it, it's done what they intended it to do.
- CM: Yes it's assimilation at a high level.
- AG: It's grandest, yea ya.
- CM: Like this summer, a lot of the people that were going to the Sundance, or have heard of it and they might go see what it is, and they are turned back at the border. And I hurt for them because they are turned back, but I hurt more for the children who might have been hearing about these things, but can't see because one or both of their parents are turned back at the border, so these kids have been just robbed from everything that was gonna be the answer to their family growth.
- AG: That is a beautiful way of putting it to your politicians. And that's exactly why I feel so strongly about our confederacy.
- CM: I do too.
- AG: To not make that an issue for us anymore.
- CM: So let's resolve it.
- AG: Exactly. I really want to get to the next question, because I think it's really important.
- CM: Are we still on number one? [laughing]
- AG: Well I'm sure it's going to flow because it usually does because you've kind of got through them.
- CM: You know sometimes some people will come to you, and I learned this from Mike, he'll look at you and say what's your name, and he'd say *niidaapwaa kiikasii*, and then you'd see him in the next week and he'd say what's your name, and I'd say *niidapwwakissakit*. And after a couple more times, your like come on Mike, you gotta remember my name. You know? But what that is, is when he says that, it's not him saying, it's him physically sitting there, but he is the connection, making helping you this persona asking for help, making that connection to everybody that can make the difference in the spiritual world, and so when he says to you what is your name, you're not physically telling him what

your name is your announcing, so everybody that recognizes that can come to help you. So yes, it's directional in a sense of then you can say I want my baby to be healthy, because you know I got an injection of some type, and they say I might have negative impact on my baby, so then you're saying to this person to announce to the spirit world, you're announcing really, but it's the way creator gave us to do that. That your saying You know, I drank when my baby was a baby and I drank when my baby was in my womb, and I would like it to be healed if it's affected. You can say creator I have this disease, I need to be healed because I need to raise my children, they'll be pitiful if I leave now. So your directing , just like this man who said "I want to take your bundle," he did not expect to live another year by himself, so through prayer he was going to live one more year, and now he;s lived more than two.

AG: So it's not the obvious layout of plans and blueprints, your referring to the connection and the reciprocity that goes with that, and the relationship.

CM: And creator if you give me this gift, I will do this in return for my life.

AG: Ok.

CM: So there comes that responsibility, not to this person and that person, they are the witnesses, of you telling to all living things around you.

AG: So on that Vow. .. Allan's talked to me about that and I've heard it from other people that, for example, I make a vow this year at one of the openings, and I make that vow that day for the year. But in between now and then I go off and I drink, I'm promiscuous, I'm whatever, whatever it is I'm living, I guess so called not in sequence of that vow or not in respect to that vow. Tell me a little bit about that.

CM: So in that vow, did you say, I will not drink, I will be promiscuous or did you just say, I make this vow, and a year from now, I will fulfill it?

AG: So that's different?

CM: So is all of that even relational? Not really. Because all you said to the creator is this.

AG: So if I make this vow today, a year from now, I'll come back and sponsor this ceremony.

CM: Mhmm.

AG: Than anything in between?

CM: And you just leave it right there. Just right. ..that's why it's so important when you are making that vow, to be so specific, and you'll hear people like Allan who have heard these, they'll say.. sometimes Ill even watch him he'll almost turn his

head kind a lean in and say “what were you saying?”. Because what he’s asking them is people who are more experienced at that, understand that, they’ll be right to the point, where others will be very general. And it would be like it’s funny but I don’t know that this is the best way to describe it, but communication, people that can communicate better, more accurately, what they want, when they say it *iitssibaadippop* the giver of life, it’s saying it out. The giver of life is the one who hears it. So it all connects it’s not like separate.

AG: Very spiritual?

CM: Yes, so say this happened what you just described this person decided to go drinking and be promiscuous, and lets say they make this vow, and Allan was the witness, every time Allan sees them and he says “how you doing”, and it’s not even about anything other than to remind this person, because we don’t ever go look for them on the day of or day before ceremony to make sure if they are going to be there.

AG: Right, it’s up to them.. So there is some onus personal responsibility.

CM: And I know of a couple of examples, we don’t make vows, well I shouldn’t say that, I don’t make vows, for other people. Because I’ve seen in the beginning of my teachings, there were persons making a vow that this person will be there, in turn for survival. Well that person, those two people, never showed up. And as a matter of fact, those two people passed on. Early in my learning’s, because I wonder if that person ever went to that person to tell them, or they didn’t understand the seriousness of not going. And just thinking if they called on the phone and said you better be here next Sunday, and they would call ..? and that never happened and they never came. I often question why was I a witness to that? Was it a deep lesson in the beginning for me in my very beginning, because even everybody else is learning. IF they are paying attention. And one was his brother, and I remember paying attention, but I remember those two, and one was this guys brother, and I remember the look on his face because if you ever watch...and heres something the people are sitting up there, when someone walks through that door, because they are probably hoping and praying that the people who have asked to come, and to see if they show up. And the people that did the vow. And even though they aren’t responsible, they have a responsibility to ...and so like when people may come and say they vow, you say “ok, I’ll see you there” because that’s the best way to come up with is to say “I will see you there”. So it already makes that full circle.

AG: So like you’ll be there.

CM: And it’s training for bundle holders that go through. I don’t know if they all catch it, and that’s why they get an Elder to sit there. The responsibility is scary to hold a bundle holder. Sometimes, you’ll say did you have any vows today, it’ll cause that person to look around and see whos there, and it also causes development of

the mind, because the bundle holder has to be paying attention to the order of the year.

AG: Right, that's a lot of work. Like and without writing it down.

CM: Yes, some have taken notes.

AG: [both laughing] Yes that would be me. My traumatized brain has not memory value to it.

CM: But don't feel bad, that was always my thinking, why wasn't I always that smart.

Both [laughing]

AG: That question may be answered more when we go through the pray, the recital of the prayer. Is what things will come out of the prayers that have been given. So when I get that chance, there may be others. But in the question does prayer instruct the values of living. It's very much based in the spiritual sense, the human existence, that it's something more than...the instructional value, I hear what you're saying, your connection, ceremony, vow, what the process looks like, will receive your instruction in some form. It won't be what we expect. Garth Brooks reference, "thank god for unanswered prayers." He ends up finding the love of his life.

CM: Our first beaver bundle, the second couple transferred, and they transferred, when that couple transferred it, I noticed a certain group of woman coming to the ceremonies. I wondered how these people what they were going to do, feel. When the couple took it, I told that lady, when you are getting ready for the ceremony, I want you to call these women because they may have no intention of being a bundle holder in their lives. And they want to participate, in whatever role, so I want you to call them, and let them know you're getting ready, and you would like them to help if they can. That's kind of a directional way, that they were able to stay intimately involved. Because without a doubt I knew I could count on those particular women to be there. And they would bring things and visit and stuff like that. It would be like their spirit their person came in my spirit gets so happy. And if I get happy, this Bundle must be happy. I didn't know how else to say or do, but I notice whenever that bundle gets open, those ladies are there, and they are even more engaged and more responsible, than they had to be when I had it, cause I was kind of motherly, people wait for me to tell them what to do. And now it's like they are like we know that cause we learned from Carol. And now they are like give us more to do. But in a way it would be like a directional blessing for them and that way they wouldn't feel awkward, now where do I sit.  
[both laughing]

AG: Connection to Bundle and ceremony. Not the people. It's another transcendence. It's about the pipe and that bundle, and that's what they want, more participants to come in and praying, and recovering.

CM: Sometimes when people ask me, what can I do. I'd tell them, if you were a baby and really wanted to be treated good, I would make a vow to bring one or four of those blankets so it can lay, I'd tell them things like that, because your showing attention to that Bundle. That's what it's about. You know that's given to us. Sometimes I'll say it like that because most of the people that I knew were so disconnected from ceremony. I really eased it, not to publicly embarrass. That was one of my top 5 rules. They would ask, can I do that, I would say of course you can. They ask what do you do with those blankets. I said we would lay them down, and lay the Bundle on them, with blankets that are blessed with the bundle, and then give them away. So prayer is the words we say, but prayer is like that also, because when we wear those shawls we put on. A long time ago, one of the things I'm told, is treat that life, it protects you. So don't throw it on the floor. On TV modern times, it's different, we don't let people walk over our stuff. It's different in the house. Because in the tipi you have to keep the order. .because it shows the disorder. In the house, we put everything where everyone is running through there. No grandkids. The point I was getting to is I think the blessings the prayer, it's not just waste. It's even thought. And to me one of my earliest teachings about thought is when you can think so quickly before you talk or do or react or whatever, that's your training. And I am one really clear memory of it. We were putting up a medicine lodge at ? on top of the hill. A little boy was goofing off, and he broke his arm, and his arm was hanging...Shows...the mother and dad, the dad was holding, I seen the dad holding it, the mother was going nuts and everybody was panicking. And they weren't thinking of what they are doing there, is that prayer was going to be the answer to right now. To the community. And they were all screaming, get out of the truck, get in the truck, call the ambulance. They left all the capacity to heal, but simultaneously as I seen that kids arm, my thought just come....?...and backed up it in gear, got to town, and there was nothing left of that kids arm. And all the eye witness know that it was hanging. So to me when you talk about prayer and direction. I knew what happened, and I never talked about it. The lady taking the bundle, and I told her when you see something like that don't even second-guess, just start praying. Because we don't have to think like that. Have your confidence , and just take care of the situation.

AG: That's a hard place to get to, lots of training.

CM: It's a difficult training because we are human. When I think back to my son, getting into a wreck, we could of probably had miracle, I went in to total, what I think of the devilish of denial, I can still remember that phone and my husband answering it, "Hello, yes this is John Murray. Where are you taking him, is he alive?" I only had a nightgown, my older son got dressed got in the pickup and we drove from browning to Kalispell. I think the concept of Denial was so strong, and there's a curve they hit and hit two trees. It was like I went into a stun, and I remember looking at my vehicle, and the wrecker is there, and kept telling myself, that ain't my car, totally denying it. And as they were loading it on the wrecker, my husband said is that your car, and I looked at the car and recognized all the stuff on the ground. I looked and I said yea. He said stop or keep going, and he

kept going, and my son and I just started crying. I thought it's easy for me to say when I seen it out there, but when it was happening to me, I just denied it. At the hospital I was on autopilot, got in there, I said where's your restroom, when we walked in there was an officer, I heard him say to my husband, we are flying him to Missoula, and I still just walked to bathroom, came back out and the highway patroller said you need to go in that room, as I started walking in there I could hear John saying you need to talk to him and because they knew he was very near close to gone. And so even like now, he said I made a vow. But I didn't even make it correctly, not dealing with our guilt. And it was the guilt of how we could of done things differently. But I think back, and he said it, if I had been thinking, I would have said Creator I will do this, as long as he is alive. And I could have said he could be a little more healthier, and I just couldn't believe, and I held it out there, because I so believed nothing would happen to him. So had we been more directional with prayer, I surely believe my son would have been ok. One day I'll meet him and he has broken every rule, of healing, that science knows.

AG: That's a miracle.

CM: That's a miracle, because once we come to our senses we did ceremony after ceremony. But if I look at that day, probably if I went over and made a smudge, he would have been ok.

AG: What does that say about intention. Is there any room for intention with in this world of prayer. They say karma, if your intentionally malicious, it will come back in a negative way. Around you. If your unintentional, human error, it's potentially not going to be like that, and when your praying, because after my mom passed away, I was living in Missoula at the time, for a year. I moved away from home for the first time, and three months later she was gone. And I always felt like I did that, like I pulled her grandkids away, I was her baby. And she was alone when she died. And it was all that, and when I got to Missoula, it was before Christmas, she died late November, funeral early December, I was so grief stricken, especially having to live there, away from my support system, my community, but I remember lighting that smudge that one day, or Scott did it, and I wouldn't pray, you know why bother, and I remember that smudge being lit in the kitchen and I went over, I couldn't say anything, no words would come out. And I stood over there, and I just sobbed, I didn't even know what to say. But that night she came to me in my dream, in this coat that I used to bug her about wearing and I said that's so old, why are you wearing that, and she was wearing that coat, she tapped me on the back and I turned around and I just grabbed her and I hugged her and she hugged me back and there was no words. ... she came just to hug me. But I always thought about it, and Scott would say you don't have to say anything, they know, they know what's inside of you.

CM: Makes you wonder what that coat represents huh?

AG: Yeah.



- CM: Did you think about it. When you said she had that coat, that coat, something about that coat.
- AG: Yah I'll be thinking about that coat, thanks carol...[both laughing] . .And Allan had explained to me, you know some people will just pray in those lot of times, lot of vows are made for life, for someone's life, a child, or mother, or self, you can go through all these steps to try and save another's life, and there's gonna be a time where there is just nothing more your just done, you've done everything you can humanly possible, on our side. And then you just have to accept it's on the other side. If you're gonna go, you're gonna go. And he talked about those stages ...
- CM: My husband talks about this story, his grandmother, his dad passed when he was 19, he was the oldest of 10 children, and the baby was a month old, and so his grama, his mother started drinking, and she drank till she died in 1974, she drank for almost 10 years. So the old lady raised all those kids, took over everything, some given to this one, given to that one, the older sister takes some for a while. When john got into prayer, he would always pray for her, that she would com out of it. Finally one time she would just walk, she would slide her feet, she was sick..but would slide her feet on the floor, she told him "Lil John, grampa keeps coming after me, don't do anything I need to go," and he said so after that he never said anything, more she went.
- AG: Wow, that's huge ..
- CM: And that's where my son when I accepted the fact he was a ? for Creator, I could sit up there and transfer that bundle, that's how I could do it that day. Cause I just thought who the heck do I think I am, controlling this earth. Who gave that gift? And it was you who took care, it's not like a punishment, and when I accepted that I made up my mind that I was going to come back alive for my children, my grandchildren. Make me happy...
- AG: You're a strong woman, that's amazing.
- CM: But it's hard,
- AG: Ya, that's just incredible, it astounds me the strength of prayers and the human beings. I think after I hit a certain point. After my grief because I didn't have my father in my life.
- CM: Is he still alive.
- AG: Yes he is. And I never really did anything with that. He showed up for the funeral. And he was around which was really interesting, but she was everything, and I had a lot of guilt, cause it was after I left and she was alone, I had a choice to go home to Canada or Washington to visit my uncle, and I went to visit him. And I have these things that role through you...yay a just all that. But then getting to that point of thinking, there was something last year. Because my spouse is Sioux

Lakota, they have these ceremonies, it's wiping of the tears...and at the time I was at Missoula I didn't really cleanse or anything, I just lost myself, and when I finally went home to *Piikani* I asked Allan to help me, paint me help me and pray let me let go of her, and not wanting to hold her back if in any way I was. And just being cognizant of the effect we have here over there. Finally something clicked. Because we went through 3 years of death, of major people in my life ending with my mom. And not having big trauma for decades. And death becomes this fixation, fascination, and people are giving and helping and sharing what they can. I remember hitting that point last year thinking no matter what our life here is very unpredictable., I have no control, I'm a control person.

CM: It's from having so much responsibility.

AG: Yea, and then relinquishing some of that and let myself just be carried. I always think of that prayer footprints. And I'm not a Christian or anything.

CM: I didn't know it was a prayer.

AG: Oh really, maybe it's a poem or something. [both laughing] But that I'll carry you in those times, and that's the only thing I can think of that analogy of being carried through that and trust and you'll get through anything, cause I've survived the biggest pains. And I guess I'm functioning through.

CM: This is the higher order. Your functioning. To be doing what you're doing, keeping what you been through, and that's the difference. Cause you could of went and stayed in depression. You could have but something was driving you and it was probably your spirit. And it will get you there, I mean honestly, I don't know what other than that that got me here today. Just recently, told John geez we only had 4 kids together, cuz I was helping my grandson who's 19, just think if our sons were healthy and here, they would have taken care of him all summer. I was just rambling, riding in the car and.. and he said I been thinking about what you said our two sons, I been thinking about them, my goodness they're gone aren't they? And my daughter who's 47, said I so miss the LP I knew but I'm going to try and get to know this knew LP. The difference between death is when you put them in a coffin and you put them in the ground it emotion. But when you take a person who was this person and they go through this and they come out and they aren't any of that. But when you look at them you play a mind game trying to envision that person, cause they're just a different person. He had to start couldn't remember anything. Help do you remember this, there was this one where they won the state basketball tournament, undefeated, and remembered that, and I would go back to you remember this, she didn't remember, and do you remember you were such a big baby. And everyone teased you, and they would be like omg, you're going to school and you're still nursing. . . and so all of a sudden we had his memory up to two years before his wreck, but he couldn't remember after that, then one day he went right up to when he remembered just before the wreck, and someone told me that he was the passenger in the wreck and they were going through the light about 5:30, I can't remember who it was told me, the last

thing I remember and I was going by IGA and there was no cars in the parking lot. And from there it was an hour and a half to...but he didn't tell me that he told me he remembered going into Browning being at this party, he remembered these two girls standing on the table dancing, and he knew he was really drunk and one of the girls he was in love with. You know how that goes., and so he was watching her and so drunk not to make a fool of himself trying to make an impression on her and he remembers going out the door, and digging in his pockets his keys in his pocket and he went outside and decided he was going to go to sleep, and then he remembers her coming that girl, coming and opening the door and said can you give me a ride home, and she lived in East Glacier and he told her I can't drive I'm too drunk, if you wanna drive yourself home, I'll just sleep there, meaning he'll just sleep in the car. And that's what he told me was his last memory. And his cousin said that when that girl went and asked him for a ride home her cousin and another friend got in the back seat and that when she drove to East Glacier and the girl in the back seat got in the driver seat went back to Browning dropped off the guy, and she was gonna drive to Pablo that night to her sister and that's when they wrecked. So he remembers her asking for a ride home. And he doesn't remember the ride up there or anything. But then just recently someone said he remembers going by IGA, and it could have been when she was going to East Glacier or it could have been when he was going to ...so I had to sort through that and look at my son, and he couldn't do anything, just couldn't do anything, global damage to them. And here is this kid who could physically do just about anything, to this total person who couldn't do anything, couldn't even? he'd get a dry mouth so we would take a little straw and put a little water in his mouth, but we couldn't let the water go down his throat, cause no muscles to direct it directly, otherwise he would've choked to death. If we wanted to hold his hand we had to hold it up...but the only thing that, his aunt whose a nurse thinks he might have had a stroke, because we stretched him, we did everything, because when they are in a coma their muscles shrivel. He had a roommate who fell rock climbing and his mom had a bunch of little ones that come in and she didn't have time to stretch him and he was just all curled. And so we knew if we didn't stretch him that's how he would be. Today, the back big muscle it's shrunk so it pulls his foot.. and so he has kind of a short leg, but other than that we worked and worked. And when you have a burn and touch people's skin it's like needles. Painful

AG: Really wow. Does he show that.

CM: Now there's nothing, but at that time people would come and... say how you doing LP, are you ok...but we had to keep him moving, regardless, but he went through pain, probably beyond imagine, beyond childbirth, gallstones, but his whole body his whole existence, but I couldn't understand when and they had to actually..he fell off of his bed in rehab, his stomach tube came partially out, it didn't come all the way out, but the part that was sticking in to where the food should have been going into the stomach was going into the body cavity, so it was on a Friday night and I came back from ...you know sometimes, I don't know where I got this the only, I seen how that little boy didn't have insurance I seen

how he got curled up, I had health insurance, cause I was a teacher, so I came back to browning for orientation, as long as I was working, they couldn't believe the health insurance I had for an injury like that, ..had never anybody with that health insurance, and public school insurance, ... but anyway they called me and what I'd do is gas up the night before, and my daughter molly was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and I would pull into Missoula at 7 o'clock, and I would walk out and just go. And always had arrangements for her cause she wasn't going to sit at the hospital. I was in my daughters second car and that one Friday I got a phone call and you know reception through the mountains, and I just got on the other side, and I could see my phone and it was john and he was what time you gonna be here, and I said I should be there by 7...oh okay, and I heard him tell somebody she'll be here at 7, and I could hear a little conversation and said ok. I was going 90 miles an hour...that's how I made it. I think it was around ronan or Pablo my phone rang. My husband said where are you at, I said Pablo, he said how long is it going to take you to get here, and he said Dr. Allan wants to talk to you, well I knew what that meant, and he was a the main doctor. I thought john is just being bugging, why does keeps calling me? It was almost that denial again, he said Dr Allan wants to talk to you, I said what's wrong, he said you better talk to her, he said carol how soon are you going to be here and I said not long I'm close, she said ok, I just want you to know if there is any way to get here any faster we need you here, she said we are going to take LP into surgery. Well that week he was having complications, ... his fever wouldn't go down, they said everything that was going on, here what they were doing is when tube feeding him they thought it was going down but it was going into his body cavity, and it was poisoning him. In his whole body, so she said well carol I have to be just frank with you now, you need to get here as fast as you can, we are taking LP into surgery, I want you to know that if you're not here by 7 o'clock I as the Dr am gonna have to sign permission to take him into surgery, I don't know why they didn't let john sign as guardian, .. I said I'll be there, in the meanwhile I was focused on that road, so I got there, when you get there it's kind of a ways to walk...when I come in all those doctors are standing there with all those masks on and shoes covered... well I thought well he must be alive because they wouldn't be standing there with those surgical things on, I just talked to myself, and I seen Dr Allan saying things and she was all garbed up and she had this note, . a board you write on, I need you to sign we don't have time... I want you to know it's 50 50 chance, he may make it and he may not, she said his bodies totally poisoned and we have to cut him open, and she said I don't know if he can come back out of it. . and I signed it , she said you need to sign it before he goes in, and I signed it and I said LP it's me mom, I'll see you in a couple of hours, they have to fix something in your stomach...I had to keep that positive talk going, and we just followed him down , they just took him right in the room right there, and I said we won't see you until it's all done. Whatever that means, until it's all done, so they went in and had surgery, and I just thought I told him, I'll see you when you're done.. You know and I keep thinking how did I say that, did I phrase it right? .. anyway it was probably about 2 hours., it was long, finally that doctor came out, and he just looked drained, and he said I want you to know we cleaned him out and I want

you to know it's still a 50/50 chance. And I thought well he's alive cause there wouldn't be no 50/50 chance if he wasn't...they cut him from here to here, cut it wide open, and just flushed it out, and they can't sew it up because of infection, he couldn't even have tolerated a little infection. And they call it wet to dry, they lay the wet gauzes over the cut and the dry ones on top, and the dry is suppose to pull everything out. that was Friday night, Saturday night, and Sunday night, they had this bottle of morphine, and any little he would just sweat... he would just pore with sweat, he would soak his whole bed, his sheet, then they hit that morphine and just sweat. He'd get physical therapy twice a day, and by noon that Monday that doctor came in and they said LP was jus sweating from that morphine, and it was like he had become and a drug addict over the weekend, and he was just sweating it out, and the doctor said, he's scheduled for therapy, and we better wait on that. It was a few days and they have this bike, and that was his first physical therapy and he wanted to go. after that. His stomach was cut wide open...cannot hear...that's a good thing, but they had to come in and take that dressing on very regularly scheduled hours, so no infection. They wanted to leave it open a little bit too for the air, and some of his very close high school friends would come and they would clean him. And they asked if you want his friends to go and I said no, I think his friends need to see what he goes through so they can ...and they all just stood there.. cannot hear...they didn't have any idea what was going on, cause when they'd come in the sheets would all be wet? But I think 10 years will be next year and when we took him out of the hospital, at that time scientific research showed that people with a brain injury like his, if they lived, where they were at two years would be how they would be for the rest of their lives. He couldn't talk or anything, it was all muscle development. Two years later, which was 2004 he wanted to take Blackfoot at the college so he could learn the language. .So I quit working at the school, I was teaching at the public school and my husband and my son were getting tired from taking him to all his therapies, and I would sleep by him at night and put just a mattress next to his, and they would sleep so they could drive back and forth to great falls, and I would sleep in the floor during the nights cause I figured I just had to go to school and teach. Get him up in the morning, about 5:30 and clean him up and have him on the road. And once they left the house I would jump in the shower and go to work, and get back home so they would have supper ready so they could eat, and I'd do his stomach feeding and lay him back down for the night.

AG: How long did you do that.

CM: Recollecting...Oct. 30 2002, I think he took two steps at the end of Oct. 2003, almost a year.

AG: Wow you guys are amazing.

CM: But you know what we had when we were over in Missoula we had a fifth wheel. And they gave us a rate at KOA, had a special program for people in the hospital, charge \$250 a month for a trailer and we took both of our bundles over there, we had our beaver bundle and we had the horn bundle over there all that time. The

closer they are to you the better they can care for you. When he came home than they came home too. One of the things you said when you left, sometimes you know I guess being a mom like I am, I'm not ready to go yet because my son can't take care of himself, but when we work hard in life, than your mom must of worked real hard.

AG: Wow!

CM: So she knew you could take care of yourself...she can pray for you?

[pauses]

AG: I never thought of it that way...

CM: So don't feel bad. Just think of her as healthy, resting, happy, able to show you that ugly coat.

AG: Wow!

CM: You don't need her physical presence, you can handle it on your own. Spiritually, just like my son, he's still here. ..just like..cannot hear...prayer, she's got prayer now. And I think about like a lot of people say, just last week some people my age, they must think I'm really old, and they're my age, and they come up to me and I say how you guys doing, and we were just talking when we get as old as you we hope we have enough energy, and I just said well I hope you do too. [both laughing]

AG: That's really amazing Carol, that's really special. Thank you

CM: You know don't worry about your mom. Of course we hurt, sometimes that's why .. when we are don't and out but don't let it in too much. . . I had a memory I don't know how little, I used to just cry and I used to cry hard...

AG: My mom would talk to me about those, like wailers, they would make people bring it out.

CM: I did that not purposely, when my dad passed away, I wouldn't go to Heart Butte because that's where he was buried and I went out to the house where and I was sad, and I would just cry. So nobody would ever mention my dad, never brought him up as soon as they did I would just cry, and would turn and walk away trying to hide my tears. My youngest girl, and my oldest grandson, they went over to Heart Butte...they had no one to take, I was getting angry, I don't wanna go there, Molly can go with Auntie, now I know I was avoiding going there, cause I love it, it was a happy place for me as a kid. I went there and I wouldn't go to the cemetery. I went to Indian days, but coming out of there, coming out there's a big curve, and just before I could feel it coming out, oh my god oh my god and tears started coming out. And I imagined what it was like if you're ever were on a ship in the ocean and you fell in and there is so much water coming in and that's how

it felt coming around that curve ... and I was trying not to let them see that and all of a sudden it came like uggg,, and it came out and I just cried and cried, I thought it was gonna wreck, and I pulled over, and it was 26 years after my dad passed away. And they just sat there and pretty soon they said what's wrong and I said oh I just miss my dad, and they said who was your dad, I never told my kids about my dad, and I just sat there and after calmed down, and they said are you ok now, and I said yea I'm ok. I just felt free open, here all these years I must of used excess of energy to hold it in.

AG: Yes it's exhausting to do that too. I only started reading about grief recovery, just kind of bought a book and it's affecting me in so many ways. And I'm tryingto heal myself.

CM: You have to.

AG: And it talked about that, hold things in. or it takes so much energy to carry that grief, I didn't realize that it's been...it's really been coming up.

CM: Are you angry yet?

AG: Oh I've been very angry, like now my relationship is pretty much dissolved with Scott and of course I'm so regretful. I don't know, I don't think he can take it anymore. And we've always been a tumultuous relationship. My kids dad I was with for 13 years. And Scott and have Roy he's 4. He's very angry with me. I make room with him, I make room with them, my aunts, my brother, uncles, my reserve,

CM: Beliefs?

AG: Ya, and it was only like the other week I sat there outside, and I never was that one to say be angry with her, but the other week I was sitting outside and said how could you just leave me here like this, look how I'm suffering, look at how hard it is. But that was like the first time I said something like that to her. Never wanted to hurt her.

CM: Just let it out.

AG: I was kind of upset, I just felt so big, I felt so small, in the cruel world. But I just all I been doing is praying. It's been everyday, is getting bearable again, like I hit this wicked low. And realizing I don't have the luxury to fall apart. I can turn into a street drunk if I wanted to, I would love to. I would love to throw it all away.

CM: It seems so easy... Can you imagine standing there Carol Just enough for a bottle.

AG: Selling everything I own. [both laughing] There is something that tells me there is no other choice. From people in my life, this is where you actually are always curious about these ways these things. Your culture.

CM: Don't ever think you are not good enough. Don't even go there, if that thought comes into your mind, just tell yourself, I might learn more this time, I might learn more this time, cause I'll tell you it's, that's what it's all about, not thinking your good enough, is a very difficult thing it's very stifling, almost like holding that? That's how much energy it takes. Just remember when you go to the ceremony for prayer, and say I came here to honour you and what you can do to help me. And from there it'll just get better. My sister n law said, can you sit here while I go to the restroom, and she looked at me and I said I need you to set here cause I need the bathroom, and I went and came back and when everything is done, she said oh my god it's powerful isn't it. And I said yah, and I think that's what carried me through all this. And I remember sitting there after my son passed away. And tears would run down my face, because he was the one that would take care of the pipes for us, so of course we had this relationship, we had a ceremony spiritual relationship, and he learned all those songs and he was really good and singing them, and sometimes when ...if ..cannot her...and he must have a lot on his mind, and I'll start praying for him to remember and think,,and my son would sit there, and I'd look at my son, and wouldn't say anything and pray for him. And we would have the ceremony, and when we first went back to ceremony during the transfer I just paid attention to the transfer but after that I would look and he would be there, plus I was given extra food, cause he as so many kids. . coming home with the bundle ood so they can dig. [both laughing] . It doesn't hurt to revisit those moments with your mom, going to her house,

AG: I'm living in her house on the reserve. It was in the city where she passed in the Condo.

CM: When you're ready go there and visit your mom. Take her into you , take her with you, because I do that, I went to Fort Hall went to Blackfoot Idaho, I went to places my son would be, I'd say come with me, I couldn't just do it by myself, come with me because I'm a human being, I just needed those things. I would say just come with me, just hang out with me, if this big old crown would grandstand, .would think this old woman would be off her rocker.

AG: I think my fellow psych students would say, and I'm like there really are people that see spirits. [both laughing]

CM: The last time I was at that place, my son that won that championship, I was there watching them their relay team and during the picture went out there and got a picture with him. And when I sat there he was there, it was a good thing. And that's nothing to be sad about.

AG: I visited Albuquerque, it was really emotional, she loved it there, and she loved all the southwest, the last time I was down there was with her, with all the kids, it was hard. I push myself to face, I don't know why I'm like that, my brother avoids everything in. I don't know maybe it's the psychology, or the teachings telling me...



CM: It's your spirit pushing you. A lot of times people don't pay attention to their spirit. They can't figure out what it is, why their happy, or sad. I think it's important to do that. The one place I hadn't been with my youngest son was fort hall, he was so proud of his ventures down there, I was in the grandstand, Fort Hall was a ways from Blackfoot but they are two different events, so I went into Fort Hall, , and I went in the grandstand I was watching my nephew, and then my grandson then ran. And I was really happy for them because it was my grandsons first jr, and I was really emotional, but what I learned about myself at that moment is I was very cautious about the way I opened up, I wouldn't allow to be too open,

AG: Too painful.

CM: Yes, and I was standing there with my grandson smiling so big, and I was so happy and I was just by myself, the whole grandstand was just screaming cause it was exciting, and I was just looking and my other relative was riding for this other team, and when he come, he used to wear his hair right short, they don't really look alike but have the same physique, and my son kept his body in really good shape, he could just jump on a horse no problem, and the kid came around he jumped and did that same exact jump, and everybody else was seeing him and I seen my son comin straight toward me, and my feelings opened up and I was doing a pretty good job at being happy, and I was like oh wow, real happy, and when I turned like this, this lady down there, when I turned like this, she musta known, and when I turned around and she seen me and said do you remember be? And my emotions were wide open, and I said yes I remember you, and she put her arms out, and it felt like my body jerked and my tears come out and so did hers and I just held on to her. I walked down that ramp, and I started up, and the kid that looked like my son, he was cleaning up, I didn't see him right then, but after I got up there by the trainers he turned like this, and all that time is was wishing...and when he turned around tears went down my face, and he just looked at me and said are you ok, and I said I'm ok, and I said you look just like LP up there,...I said I don't want you to feel sorry for me. I just want you to know that I'm healing. He said I had to do this, I had to feel this, I'm healing. And he said ok, and he had tears. Well LP it's over you can come home now. Then I think he did because I went up to see him last weekend in Missoula, and he did some stuff he said some things, he was walking across that golf course where they were running oh my god I think I just seen more healing. It's all coming together. Science said two years, I brought him to a Brain injury conference at three years, and they were not to five years, and wherever he was at is where he at for life. And not too long after that I told my husband, it's up to five years. And he's a real reader he reads into anything, and now it's up to 10 years, and I thought I believe in miracles, and I wouldn't be surprised is if what I saw up in that golf course, it's not that much older and it's like it's not that much longer, next year hell be 11 years older, but now to see him grow to be a man. My husband's been talking about stuff like, how do we know he didn't choose such a hard life, the lessons are for us and for him.

- AG: I was thinking for you to go through all of these things, and to feel so much, and to look at you and to think how amazingly brave and spiritual, and connected. And think there is no reason for me to fall short on some things.
- CM: ...many many times for the rest of your life. Just like your dream, they say the difference here and your dream is just that your asleep.
- AG: It's pretty , it makes it so much, I have dreams of her, like snapshots, of life, like a regular of her, it's different, in the beginning I felt there were more messages, like stronger, like the second one we were going to start dancing, and we were picking out dresses, and of course she was picking out Tacky ones, and I was like no. [both laughing] And I followed her outside, and we were walking down the sidewalk, and she was dancing, kinda funny, and happy and light, and here she had just finished her Masters. She didn't even get to graduate, so we had to go up to the college that was affiliated with the U of C, and it was her masters of social work, and they gave me a shawl for her work, and I just balled. And they didn't even know, and I never got her a shawl, and I was going to gift her with all of these things when she graduated. And here they honored her a couple weeks ago, and they've been honoring her in various places and they've all been really really painful and I feel humiliated cause when I go up there I'm just balling. And you mention my mom just balling. You can mention all the colonial Indians, but you mention my mom just balling. When it comes to my mom I just ball. It was up in Calgary, I wanted to bring her shawl, I got Leroy to come, and you know Leroy.
- CM: Yes.
- AG: And him and Amethyst are like my adopted parents; they've taken adopted me about 10 years ago. And then I had this one and this one's their baby. And I asked my son Alex to sing, and he said I'm going to ask Leroy to sing with me, so they sang.
- CM: It just opens you up.
- AG: Oh ya, and then I brang that shawl and told them that's what they gave us for her, and I I tried to talk and geez it was like just too much. And then I seen my aunts they were like her daughters cause she was one of 11, the second oldest. My uncle Connie and my Mom, she was like the mother. When I see them I know how they feel in that sense they were like her children too. They just still feel lost and cause their parents died really young. My mom was 29 when her mother, and a year later her dad died. And my mom was 58, she would'a been 60 this December. I don't know there is something about, death is a very prominent thing within amongst us, for anybody but it seems like were compounded with it as Indian people. And those traumas you talked about with the history. Like did you read *Fools Crow*?
- CM: No.

- AG: You really it's about the Baker Massacre it's a semi fictional, I've had people tell me about it but haven't read it. It's so emotional it's really unreal cause he's not even Blackfoot.
- CM: James Baker's wife is trying to make a movie about the Baker massacre. We brought them down there to look at it.
- AG: I used it in my Community Development Course, something about history, it showed the lifestyle, it really got in depth with everything, death lodges, songs, wicked stuff, small pox, the small pox camp that were around annihilating people. Really in depth, really severe, something that was good to read and in the end the massacre it was really heavy, like brutal and there was a prophecy in there, they talked about these men, I don't know if it was a real person or a fictional character, and the schools they saw coming and then the massacre.
- CM: I'll have to look at it. I was regretting it for a while, but now I'm not cause now I actually have time to read things, and look at movies that I never had time to, and I was learning ceremony and I was running the college, and all the recovery of my son, you know. Just didn't ever have time to do those to read books or ... I remember in 2000 when I...the college, and...I was excited cause I was going to watch a movie from beginning to end. When I was doing my master's program so I never been like not doing something. And now, my daughter just moved to Great Falls. Last night we went to fence after work. [both laughing]
- AG: That's cool I'd love to be able to do that. You're super Indian woman. That's so awesome.
- CM: Kinda hate to finish that fence cause what are we gonna do.? [both laughing] My eldest daughter she said hey mom you know what dad calls you, I never heard him call me anything, no and she said he calls you "raw hide".
- AG: [laughing] Too sick!
- CM: My head just jerked. "WHAT!?" she said yea he said I wonder what Raw Hide is up to now. And she said whos raw hide, and he said your mom! [laughing]. I said that just gives me energy!
- AG: [laughing] To go beat him up! [both laughing]
- CM: He still don't know that I know.
- AG: Oooh. really, oh man that's love right there at both ends I swear. [both laughing]
- CM: And I just thought Raw Hide? [both laughing]
- AG: At least you got a man to be calling you a name. I'm chasing mine off left and right.

- CM: [laughing] you sound like my daughter. That one day she calls me, “Well mom!” It’s that well mom, I just know there’s something, “Well, he left again,” “Well Angie I’m going to teach you a lesson.”
- AG: Oh no her name’s Angie too. [both laughing]
- CM: Don’t pack everything up; don’t waste your time doing that cause he’ll be back!
- AG: Oh that’s what my mom would tell me, she’d say why are you getting so upset about it? You guys are going to get back together, just continue on don’t get so riled up. So it kinda messes with you and you kinda have some sort of a break and then it’s like reality, and like, “oh yeah!” [both laughing] ... that’s so sad.
- CM: Don’t waste your time doing all that. You’re just mad and upset, don’t waste your time, go do something else. And she’s like, “all the help you are!”
- AG: Yeah, I wanna grieve; I wanna cry; I wanna feel terrible; and you’re like, “I don’t wanna hear it.” [both laughing]
- CM: We were joking about it and it was like
- AG: What does prayer speak about wellbeing?
- CM: The prayer is that the person who is asking, that whatever is best for them will come to be. So in that sense sometimes as a human being, we may not recognize at the moment what is best for us. But the prayer is the energy moving to put that person in the right direction. The right direction meaning whatever is best for them, in the bigger picture of the world. So I guess for me that’s where when, I guess that’s how I am understanding the question, is that we are directing the wellbeing of a person. We never pray for negative, for things that are not good. So sometimes people will say, they will use that saying, be careful what you ask for, you just might get it. So what might feel like challenging, future? People use another cliché’. God will never give you what you can’t handle, but sometimes the comfort of doing the easier thing, I think people will wonder why they didn’t get that.
- AG: What do you mean?
- CM: Say if we are praying for what’s best for a person, their wellbeing, some people are intelligent and they don’t know that they are. So they will be put into challenging intellectual situations. Other people just have this personality type where people are drawn to them and they don’t think they have the energy to give and they do. Sometimes a person thinks they know what they need, but prayer will direct it to. I’m not sure if prayer is even accurate in that sense, but it makes you become a more complete fuller human being. So when we are talking about prayer in relation to the wellbeing of a person, it’s giving the person the encouragement and the energy to become somebody that they will appreciate in

the long run, not necessarily, sometimes it's immediate, but sometimes it's just overall satisfaction of life.

AG: So sometimes people go and make specific prayers, and sometimes it's related to somebody else. We talked about those Vows for someone that may be sick or whatnot, but sometimes it's specific to the individual, they're praying for themselves, from what I gather from what you just said, they may not get what they prayed for? But they will get what they need?

CM: Yeah they will move toward, it's really what they need but they don't recognize it.

AG: something else recognizes it

CM: Yeah. But in the end, when they get to the end of their life and they will look back and say I would have never went that direction. But after I went to this person and they prayed for me it seems like my life just gravitated that way

AG: Okay.

CM: Sometimes people don't recognize their own abilities, their own gifts

AG: So what does that say, that whole understanding you just said, like you said in your last interview, be specific in your prayers. Be specific in what you are asking for?

CM: The person you go to is important. I can't say that I know what everybody prays for, that would just be way off. But this is what I pray for when people ask me. So when we say be specific, it gives the person you're asking prayers for, an indication of where they're coming from. What is it that seems so important at the moment? So to me that's how I would say that. Someone may come to me and they may say I want this, this is what I think I should be doing. But all it really is it's explaining to the person where that person's at, you know. So the relationship can be better. Than just, in a sense, if I just had someone come to me and say pray for me. I could just pray for them. But then you don't really know where they are at. And I have people say I had this person pray for me and nothing really seemed to happen. And I'm like, well I'm sure something happened. But I'm not sure it's what they wanted or had in their mind and never expressed. So in that term be specific, it's just getting to know a person. So if my spirit and that person's spirit, who's asking for prayers, if our spirits can connect, we can see way broader for where we are headed than the human physical moment, that's kind of my belief

AG: Yeah, yeah. You just touched on something. It depends on who you go to for prayers. I really believe that to be true. A lot of times our people might just be directed, go see this person. They're strong, or they hold this or that. But what else, is it important to have a relationship outside of that circle. Tell me a little bit of what you meant by that.

CM: Some people are just gifted I think, with just having a pure spirit, a pure heart. They aren't always necessary in ceremony. Like maybe I don't know that this is always the case, but an example I would say is, say you take a lady, she's a young girl, she becomes a teenager, 20s, 30s, grows. She becomes a grandma. And it doesn't have to do with chronological age, but a relationship. Say most people, we are pretty happy if we see an elderly lady. The majority of them seem really, there's just a softness about them, kind good feeling.

AG: Yeah.

CM: I think that's kind of what I'm saying. Of course grandmas are really responsible to their family. So are grandpas. I guess where I was kind of going with that is, some grandmothers in our generation, all era, where not allowed to practice their ceremonies. But they have that same thing

AG: Yeah.

CM: They have that same thing. You can go to them and you're like gee, she just walks around like she's nobody and here she's so smart, you know, and that's what I'm talking about. It's like, it's as important in my mind, to know those kind of people.

AG: Right

CM: Because we have had such an interruption of our culture and ways, and but the people are still there and they all survived through the same horrific life that we come from. So I guess it's, I think when because they haven't been introduced, or because they have been taught to fear our ways, doesn't make their prayer any less. But you can tell, if they start running down this one, and running down that one, it's kind of like well they aren't that open either. But I think if they say, they're doing their best over there, why did you come to me? Well you can tell that's a good person

AG: Humble, the humility part

CM: Yeah. So I think when we are talking about who we can go to, sometimes it can just be a child too. You know they are so pure huh? They just kind of set us straight every now and then. You can tell when the message is, you're looking at the kid saying my god, how did that wisdom come out of that mouth [laughing]. So I think that those types of relationships to be open to. I think that people who are fortunate enough to take that challenge of becoming in ceremony, because that was critical...over here if you got involved in ceremony, it wasn't too popular here, as a matter of fact, the oppressive Christian issues that they had with us, if they could cut off our ceremony, then they could change us. quote prevalent here, it was even way more prevalent, it's lessening now. People are getting to see that. That acceptance of other ways you know. You can still get there. Different ways.

- AG: Well I see it in the college driving up, and seeing the signs, Painted Beaver Lodge, and I thought ugh how beautiful! What a beautiful place to come to everyday and have those words, those names, showing themselves and if people have a bit of more understanding of where they come from, just even the more greater appreciation to see it celebrated and being tangible, alongside an educational institution. So it's really beautiful, it's really nice to pull up and see that. I wish our communities had more of those.
- CM: Yeah and you will get there, you will get there. It may not be exactly the same, but I think that's what we leave for creativity and innovation.
- AG: Creativity is not far away from Creator. So in talking about prayer and wellbeing. It comes down to where you're stepping into the spiritual realm, whatever that is, ceremony, discussion, uh visiting like you had mentioned, people outside of the transferred rites process. Getting involved in that, I guess intimate setting, to pray for things to come into one's life in a positive manner. Then it's really left up to the faith process. Is that what you're saying?
- CM: Yes.
- AG: I'm going to give this up and Creator is going to bless me in way I need, it's obvious or indirect or direct, today or maybe down the road. But there's no, I want to say science to it, because there is a bit of science. But it's actually, there's no ABCD
- CM: No.
- AG: Kind of steps, predictability?
- CM: No, no. because the person who is praying for you has faith in their prayers they're giving. But the person receiving the prayers has to have faith in their self and their responsibility. In order for it to go. I know like before I used to be real shy. I make reference to shy in a sense that I was very extremely careful where I went and approached people and were around people. And if people challenged what I had to say, I would sense inside I got more determined. More determined to make something come true that I believed in. That has a lot to do with, just like you said there's really no scientific description to it, but there are things like that, your personal self-determination. And then the other part of it too, when I was growing up they would say oh she's so nice, l she will never get mad, she's so nice. That's how I grew up around my own family. Then my dad started telling them, and people would almost be like well lets just see if we can get her and. And my dad would just say, don't get her mad, she's one you don't want to get mad. Because that self-determination can be the other way
- AG: She will really flip out [laughing]

- CM: Yeah! So when we talk about that, when a person takes on a challenge, it's really inside the determination. People want so much to have someone, someone's, to see that determination.
- AG: So you're saying there's like a personality determinant here?
- CM: Yes.
- AG: At least that's what is coming to mind. That can shift things, personality. Can be either very open and receiving, or it can be...we have a lot of critical minds out there amongst our people. If we are so special, or if our culture is so special, then let me see the magic, let me see the sparks, let me see something. I've heard that before from people, the skeptics
- CM: Yeah yeah, They want people to hold the hot rocks in their hands and in their mouth sort of things
- AG: Yeah! Kind of the stereotypes. And I'm talking about more transcendence of this realm, this conscious realm, but when I talk about personality I guess you mentioned that. You as an individual, can be receptive or non-receptive to the prayers or the forces that come out of that whole ceremony or prayer process. Does that make sense?
- CM: Yeah. What it made me think of when you were talking about it is a person will go to someone and ask them to pray for them ok? But it's really the person the asking, who's going through the value search. And what they stand for creates determination. That's why I used that word determination. Because say someone told you, well you should go do this, you're not just going to just go do it, just because you were told to do it. You're going to search. You're going to search yourself and say if I do that, I am taking this step towards something. I don't know what's being stepped towards, this something. I think that's why I call it value, it's personal value clarification. Because you're kind of coming into a responsibility that maybe a person could have been avoiding. But they have to take a stand. Because even, if you think about a little child, people pray for them. You treat them good and they will follow along, and do what they're going to do, but some days they will just no! I don't want to do that. And you just figure how does that little tiny human being have so much know of what they want to do. And we take it lightly because they are a kid. But as an adult, say you took a 60 year old person and they said no I don't want to do that. Is it the same as that little five year old saying no I don't want to do that? So when we are looking at that determination, self-value, understanding, what's okay to do. To me that's where I wouldn't think of that example, unless you asked me a question like that. Like of the 60 year old and the five year old, no I don't want to do it. And the 60 year old will be saying over my life time I've earned all these thing, I'm comfortable like this. But a five year old saying no I don't want to do this, it's like how do they know that, how would they know. You know their values at the time is like we have to raise this child to become this 60 year old, but yet they're telling us that at



that age...but I guess when you said it back to me, you made me think if using the word, this person is going to have to go inside and ask themselves am I comfortable doing it. Comfortable in the sense if I do that and something good happens, then I might go back and do another step. Or I might just be comfortable backward. So I think when we're looking at how does prayer direct that, it's what best for the person.

AG: So sometimes we don't need to push ourselves to face things fears, uncomfortable situations. I mean from a therapeutic standpoint, that's kind of what therapy is about, is pushing the client to get past places of anxiety, things that are fearful, facing fears. Talking and addressing impacts from childhood that they never wanted to talk about, that's kind of what, at least western therapeutics kind of mandate. So with, from this side, to me that's all I kept thinking is, well why don't you want to do that, the 60 year old man, what are you not wanting to face. And at that point, a lot of things my mom didn't want to talk about, and she was going to be 58, that part of her life I just kind of stopped, I didn't make her open up anything or go there, so what she left with this world, was what she was comfortable with I guess and that's a good thought for me, is that she wasn't all torn up inside. A lot of this stuff residential school things, right? I think that's a real big issue right now, at least in the communities up North, lets open Pandora's box and start talking about it. But it's not happening at this mass level like people aren't talking about sexual abuse, trauma, they're not talking about those things because I don't know if we have those resources or abilities or safety nets or whatever, comfort zones, safe zones for them to that, and there's particular people doing it but not at the masses.

CM: Yeah, now the healing level that people wanted, or had hoped for, we had hoped for, yeah. You know because I think when you use it in a context of that, I guess the question to the therapeutic counsellor would be what good does it do, say if a 58 year old lady, to tell someone I've been sexually abused? Is the intent to, is there some sort of now it's okay that I said it? Or this hindered me from developing through life, this scared me. I couldn't have healthy relationships, you know from this. I think that's where I've been wondering how that's going to evolve over there. Because a lot of the stuff that I hear, I don't know the field that well, but the stuff that I hear is, you know these people are going there, and it's coming out to be a monetary push. That if you give me 50 thousand dollars, Somehow I'm going to overcome the things that happened to me in boarding school. And granted I haven't thought through it a lot, but I thought through it because I have been going up North for a long time, very actively since 1982, and actively mean regularly. If I had to do the average, I would say maybe at least once a month from 1982 to present.

AG: That's quite a bit.

CM: I guess one of the things is economically, when I say economically, the money will help. Maybe the poverty that was created because of the inhibitions of the people who were abused, be it physical or spiritually or socially, sexually. I guess

it's kind of reminds me of here when no matter how hard things are all year, at Christmas we get a Percapita. I think the lowest it's ever been is 17 dollars and the highest it's ever been is 100. But it's amazing when that week is coming along, and everyone is going to pick up their Percapita check, how the energy level comes about, so I don't see anything wrong with that monetary thing, I don't see it as being a wrong. I think maybe it's an indicator of hope, maybe that's what it is. That's what I see with the Percapita. I was teaching school, I taught the seventh grade for three years and sixth grade for one, over here we have an enrollment, you belong to the tribe as a tribal recognized member, or as somebody who belonged to the tribe. My last year teaching to those who were enrolled, was a time of hope. But my last year of teaching I brought it up, and I wanted to see how it's effecting the younger people who were not allowed to be enrolled, and I said how many of you are going to get you're Percapita next week? And I was very shocked and this would have been the Christmas of 2003, I was very shocked to see that only a couple kids in there knew they were going to get a Percapita, others didn't even know what a Percapita was and so it was an avoidance of the fact that those children did not belong to the tribe. I kind of sorted it, their parents, than rather than have them see pain, about not being included, they just don't even bring it up.

AG: Or their parents were pocketing it.

CM: And don't want it to know.

AG: When you brought up the monetary thing, with the residential school pay out. It's that third variable that's really going to mess with the research and findings. Because like you said there is an option and the date has passed, September, this past September to file a claim, a personal claim, for the survivors who want to tell their story and they're kind of basing it on the severity of the abuse and you will get a payout according to that, so they have quantified our pain, which I have a lot of issues with that, as you can understand that. They have quantified our experiences again with their western ways of knowing. Our people have learned to have to survive and that sometimes it's questionable manners, manipulation, knowing how to get things, I hear it everyday when I walk into the office. My kids got taken away, we got know groceries blah blah blah, can I have 20 bucks, those kind of things. I think this is another difficult thing we are going to have to try and get through because people are going to know be, there's the sincere ones and then there's ones that you know, but who are any of us to say who's who. They are doing it for their own reasons, but it's going to, I guess when I say the findings and the research for somebody like myself, the work that I do is to deal with those after maths of colonization, the aftermath of genocide that we have survived. I have worked to deal with those behaviors and will continue to work with that, that decolonization effort. And that's why prayer is important for me to articulate and understand, because to me that's the life force for us, of healing. Many people because of our evolution now as, if we look at it on a scale and I think of it on this scale, from totally assimilated and colonized to traditional, we are kind of in that scale of thought, mindset somewhere along that. I guess for

some people a lot of our young people, a lot haven't made up their minds and the search will continue until they're older and they finally say okay yeah. I want to participate. I see the beauty here. But then there is a lot who I find who go to university, post-secondary, and they start to get a little bit of understanding, the paradigm, the worldview, those things, and they say wow this is really something special and unique. This is something worth holding onto and learning more about and eventually participating in, and some just don't care

CM: I wonder about that, say those who just never filled that piece of that bucket, that empty bucket. In life where will they, if they go through life with that one bucket always empty, how can it be? How can it be that a person truly come into this world and totally exist? I don't know if the term is spiritual, because they have to on the other hand, when I think about the healing process that is expected to go on, because it's actually been confronted. Whether it's openly confronted or a closed room with a counselling, or a professionally of some type or an elder, meaning a ceremonialist type person. Wherever it was confronted, or are native people going to go on to be what? As Dr. Little Bear says, what is that collective agreement? That we are striving for as a Blackfoot person. We need to define that collective agreement and then we need to agree to it, and that collective agreement will be the difficult one. But if you think back, I try to think back to what we would think of being our pure culture, before contact, and when we say contact I really think, I don't know if we are afraid to just say it out, before contact with the white man, before contact with the yellow man, before contact with the black man, or is should be saying person, black person. But we sort of had this idea, who was our contact with then? Should we go to that idea and discuss our collective agreement. On the outside, we probably wore buckskin clothing, but there was something more than that and if there wasn't then we are just really chasing a dream that ain't there. But I don't think that we as Blackfoot people would say that, oh no that ain't true, because we had a life, we had a full society and everything that people strive for today, justice and liberty for all as they say in the states, social justice, just all types. So we make this assumption that back in the days before all this contact, we had all this. And yet could contact have changed us to such a great great deal? That we are struggling to go back in, and define this. Some people just say oh you just live in a fantasy of good and you just think that everything should be good, and I don't see anything wrong with that! Some people have to have that bad, uncomfortable. So I thought about, you know like you said when your mom passed and you were comfortable with where she was comfortable, but in your real thinking do you often wonder or wish for her to have something she couldn't even have defined

AG: Absolutely. I spent a lot of years trying to get her healthy, she was diabetic .... Of course I wanted more for her. When I started moving into ceremony in my mid 20s, she was not against it at all. She pulled it into her organization, they would have all night smokes, she had a bundle that was made for the organization, it was in her board room. She wanted that, she wanted something out of it. But I think somewhere there was a level of discomfort that she didn't feel she couldn't be a part of it. That's all I can think when I think why didn't she go fully into it.

Whereas I just jumped right into it. It was great, filling gaps I had all my life and I don't know if until she saw that in me, that she started finally participating at different levels.

CM: You made it comfortable for her.

AG: I think so.

CM: Because then she didn't have to say I'm stepping up and doing this, she could say I'm supporting Angela, although for her it was self serving and self satisfying for sure.

AG: Oh yeah. The last part, when she was doing her masters, she was doing it with this collaborated program between Blue Quills and University of Calgary. And the Blue Quills, what they added, even though they were Cree, and us Blackfoot have our...

CM: Our thing (laugher)

AG: Our thing, yes that's a nice thing of putting it. She would come home and say oh look this is what we did, we made this rattle and we made this, and man she was full of life with these things and she didn't care where she got it and I saw that! And she valued what she was learning intellectually and the worldview and the ceremonies were being articulated academically. And that's where she got alive and that's where she came alive. And I spent years trying to share my learning, from native American studies to ceremonies, but she was probably taking it in, but it was her own experience that she needed to go through she needed to have to connect to here

CM: Meaningful, it had to be meaningful.

AG: Exactly. That was a very important part of this, was that you had to find you're own meaning right, to step into this

CM: You can't do it just as ritual, as step one two three. If you did it like that it would be so meaningless. I think that's where, even though we like to condemn, I guess what Christianity imposed in their minds, Christianity also gave them those steps that they also needed at that time because they couldn't have these other steps no matter what. I think, for me I would...listening to what you're saying, one of the things, I don't think you could just exist as a void human being. So somehow, even though we are mad at assimilation and genocide and colonization, some of that was being met. Some of it being met. What I think angered me when I started trying to sort through it is we could be just a laughing out loud person, or we could just have a light giggle, and maybe that's what irritates that. Is that maybe we have to have the light giggle instead of the laughing out loud, enjoying life. What I first seen what the LOL means. I didn't know what it means and I go oh I wish I knew how to understand text stuff [laughing] I didn't know what it meant, and I went I wonder what LOL means. So one day I asked the kids. Like just now

we laughed, we laughed. But you think about our mothers, maybe our grandmothers, they just got to have a silent smile. They couldn't laugh out loud. From now on when you text, every time when you put LOL [laughing], we will know that we have grown. We will know that word a little bit more free and that in itself is sacred. I think when we talk about all this healing that people are going to go through, when they are laughing out loud, they're right on the path to healing. But I remember the ladies when I was a little girl growing up, I grew up out by the Big Badger, Heart Butte area, and those women all covered their mouth when they laughed. Just hiding themselves, their expression. When I think you hear these people really laugh, then whatever it is you're doing is working.

- AG: That's wellbeing, that's a part of wellbeing. We hear that a lot about laughter being good medicine, but the way you just articulated it really I think just explained it for me anyway. That freedom!
- CM: That freedom, its freedom to do that. If you ever do that in your community, when someone is feeling very healed, you will make them really uncomfortable when you start laughing, joking. Not you but you know what I'm saying
- AG: Yeah I know what you're saying.
- CM: They will be like what's wrong? You will see their reaction. And today we described it as confidence. Confidence is used. But really it's happiness, it's freedom. I think as more people become decolonized they will appreciate that behavior. The way it's being appreciated today.
- AG: It's kind of like taking the uptight colonial out of our existence [laughing] and making it down to earth and natural again.
- CM: Natural! It's that era I use when I put my hands like this, and I call it before contact. We made it, we made it full circle. And through all the contact we have had we have had an experience, but we just don't want to do it the same, we don't want to become the colonizers. We show people, and they say oh those stoic *Piikani* women [laughing]. They will say God they're fun to be around, we should just be like them! That's what we are striving for, for our own people. And then in turn everybody...
- AG: ... building better relationships. So that's, when I guess when we talk about what does prayer speak about wellbeing, I keep getting back, I used that word and I was driving over here and I was thinking maybe I used the wrong word, prayer, but you understood what I mean by that.
- CM: Yeah.
- AG: Whereas other people will say, like a religious prayer, but prayer means like everything and I'm glad that you understand. And I was thinking on my way over, being so specific and I feel like I'm never going to ask the right questions and I'm going to go back and say I should said this and I will probably never stop

interviewing [laughing]. But the wellbeing, you talked about it being equivalent to spiritual happiness, in the first interview, and the spiritual confidence, or that confidence, those are really big themes and that comes with happiness comes with the laughter, and confidence comes with I guess feeling good with the values you live by and strive by and work to attain and hold onto, or buy into

CM: Right, buy into...and it's the same with crying. For me this was kind of one that really I've been so gifted in life to have so many blessings of good. When I lost my father and my two grandfathers, and my grandmother, pretty close together, I dint even know that I would, I didn't even know the degree to what a person could block, their emotion. But I couldn't see it within myself but I could see it in other people. I don't know if you ever have experienced, I'm sure you have, you've gone to a funeral and people will be crying but they will still be standing there holding themselves and tears will be running down. And it's so calming in our community. And it's almost like okay, well what are you afraid to cry for? And I remember the first time I asked myself that question, I thought to myself, I shouldn't even be here, because I can't even, I went there out of respect, respect for kind of like, to pray I guess that this person goes on to a good place and everybody there doesn't fall apart in life because they've lost someone. But I remember the first time I thought that, I thought oh God, why do I always have to be thinking, I didn't want to be thinking, I wanted to go ahead and try and feel, but I didn't have the same feeling and I looked around and I saw them standing there and I thought holy smokes our people can hurt so bad and have no freedom to express it. And I remember the first time I saw it and I thought this is so sad, and I mean sad upon sad. I'm sad here for the people who don't have the freedom to feel bad, to hurt, to let that pain do what it needs to do to get out. Because it took me almost 25 years to acknowledge that the pain that I could hold in. and so I guess what I'm thinking of is like when we use that word freedom. Freedom to feel, freedom to know. And in your field of work, you've probably hear this a lot, like I've had men talk to me too, but women of course are more comfortable because we are women. But as soon as they begin to feel, they will wipe their tears away and they will say, here I am just trying to cry. Why should I? God I'm just crying and taking up your time, and all of a sudden they will become self-conscious of their freedom, and to me it's when they do that, that's when I get uncomfortable because I don't want them to think I am the colonizer. I want them to know, hey just cry, open your mouth and cry, and no one is going to hit you, no one is going to say anything mean to you. But if you don't cry, it's kind of pointless coming here today because you're not making movement in your personal freedom. I think wellbeing has a lot to do with personal freedom

AG: Wow that's huge. I used to tell myself that the only way to tell someone is being real is when is if they are crying or laughing, because that's when your spirit is speaking honestly, because we see so many masks, trying to be tough, strong and what's that all about is that embedded fear, that colonial fear. I think you mentioned your grandpa's sister, when you went to talk to her about the Bakers Massacre, and she was still... wouldn't talk about it because she said the bulls are going to come, they are going to hear.

CM: Yes! Years and years.

AG: I was so disturbed with that thinking and thinking of oh my gosh. I take it for granted my expression and my level of healing and my evolution along the decolonization spectrum I guess. But when I think about that level of fear our people are living at, and it's horrifying. And it is sad, sad on top of sad, because you want them to be happy, you love them that much. To be in this world, in their world, their land and to, they're the ones who should be the happiest.

CM: Right.

AG: And they're the ones who are the most unhappy, at some levels I should say. And that whole fear concept and freedom versus fear, well that's definitely a concept that I'm going to really really think about.

CM: It's almost like generational avoidance. I've never said those words together before but what you're saying and what we are talking about made me think about generational avoidance. Because this lady raised some children and one would have been her nephew, one would have been her granddaughter, those two I really associate really close with her. I didn't know it was her nephew, I thought it was her son, because all my life I knew her as her son. But it's like they're missing a piece of peace in life. Like a piece P-E-A-C-E that they can't get it. The other one is my age exactly, 58. She's a mother too. And her whenever I try and sit and visit with her, she starts breathing really uncomfortable, and she's a successful career woman. She has a home, she can take care of herself. But when you get her in a room, say if each one of these chairs were filled with a Blackfoot Indian woman, and she would start to talk, you would notice her breathing changes so drastically and I just go just relax, it's just us, it's just us at the very basic level. You don't have to do anything but be us. But I think it came from that, that fear, was so dominating. As I was waking up this morning and they were talking on TV and it had to do with the big deal of the Masryin Luther King statue yesterday, and I woke up and I was kind of hearing it, listening to it, what they were reporting and they said something about fear is, and this part I'm stumbling, what I remember thinking is my God, these people on TV do they even know what fear in this country is? You know, because it was of course national news reporters and they were saying something about, the fear back then, they kind of went back to the 60s movement, of civil rights movement of the black people. And I was just laying there, I think that's why I can't remember, because I thought I got to get up because I can't lay here and listen to these people talk about this fear and they make it sound like it's an acceptable reference I guess to make people want to move, get up and make movement. And I think that's why I jumped up and got out of bed, and I felt myself kind of you know [laughing]

AG: Getting fired up. [laughing]

CM: Yeah. Because the last thing was you don't have to do that, you can just be peaceful and I was like...

AG: I don't know [laughing]

CM: And when I gear something like that I'm like get up Carol, you can't just let that go by

AG: And my friend, Taiaiake Alfred, have you read any of his books?

CM: No.

AG: He's a Mohawk and he's out at university of Victoria, and in his speeches and he says if you don't get fired up, then what kind of Indian are you?

CM: Yeah!

AG: Because people say oh I'm not political, our whole existence is political. In a sense of what we have got to go through, in everything about us, every cell in us, these generations are awake and alive, and if you're not then what's wrong? You're shut off, and I say that a lot with our young people. And sometimes the olders, they are inactive, they sit back, they watch things happen, they aren't really doing much to benefit any causes, anything! they aren't in ceremony, they are just kind of there for themselves. Kind of that mentality, of no waves. Don't want any done for me and I don't want any... anyone else, and that's a trauma based identity right? But I think of how could you not be a part of something, whether it's on or off reserve, to push our causes ahead, to be a voice, to heal, to decolonize or whatever.

CM: You made me think of a voice, it comes to me now and then. I'm not a feminist, but I have some ideas about that. But talking about prayer and wellbeing. And I hope when I say this I really express what I mean. The women seem to have a really key role in making our wellbeing in what we want it to be in making what we want it to be in our society. But what you made me think about was that there was this guy, in my mind he was coming there praying all the time, or in Maslow's hierarchy of needs or the Blackfoot hierarchy of needs, you know what I'm saying, there are certain needs that have to be met to serve and self-actualize and all that. Well as far as I knew, everybody kind of had this common understanding of prayer, that yes you have to take care of your own needs so you can take care of other peoples' needs. Well anyway, one day I got lost, I was looking for a house and I went to the wrong house and I went to this guy's house who was in the same society as we were. And I'm not kidding you Angela, I was so disturbed, I didn't do anything about it other than pray for them, real briefly because I was so shocked, I was shocked! And then disturbed later as I realized that I just didn't think it should be like that. Went in his house, it reminded me of a little room with grey walls. There was one wooden chair with the back broken off of it, he was sitting on it, watching this little black and white TV, this big, and the little grandkids were sitting next to him on the floor and the house was not clean at all. I mean there wasn't even an attempt in my mind, to pick up the garbage trash. The mother, his wife, was there. She was not in the society with us,



ok. And I really really questioned if she was, would that scene have been different? And I'm not saying that woman's prayer is more important than male prayer, I'm not even going in that direction. But I thought about that a few times, because this person, him, has been in that constant, in that society for probably over the last over 25 years.

AG: Wow.

CM: And the mother has never been in there, or his significant other. It makes me wonder. If she had, would she have become more determined, more confident? Is that, I listen to Allan Pard, and my husband John, a few of the men, every now and then, will have a discussion about how important the woman's role is. And they have trouble expressing it, I hear their little struggle they are having, but the best they can come up with is, I know they can come up with more, the best they come up with is we can't have any of this without the woman. And I know what they're doing and their taking their male chauvinistic ways today that [laughing] because these are some proud men, who've done what they've done. But going back to that example

AG: Who are still trying to self actualize? [laughing]

CM: But going back to that example, had that woman, sometimes I think I wish I had lots of time in my day, I'd like to go up there, not as an experiment, to know if that home is still the same. Because I felt, I just thought, God you did this to me because you know I'm trying to find this house, and it wasn't that house I was looking for, you did this to me, you exposed me to this for what reasons, and today is the first time I dealt with that, just now when I told you. If that woman got involved, would it take that for them to feel that freedom that we talk about?

AG: Yeah that's pretty shocking.

CM: Oh it is. I was just disgusted to be honest.

AG: It just doesn't make sense hey.

CM: I was just disgusted I was like what? And I was my God! All we want is clean, they had water running in the sink, so they could have had clean in the sense of that. So anyway, so when we talk about prayer and wellbeing, is it the woman's responsibility to do that? In Blackfoot world?

AG: To do what?

CM: To be so responsible, to be so confident, so determined that our society will. I don't know the *Napi* stories very well, but this one I've heard, remember when the men lived alone and the women lived alone, and then the women pitied the men and then they, I think then we became living together. Could it be so, in this example of this house, that's the men living, and the woman's living, so why is her house like that? Why isn't her house nice? So when you're thinking of your

work and all the people who are healing with all the traumas of life, you will have to remember this story, and not that it's all on the woman, that's not what I'm saying. But what role is that to acknowledge. Because I would guess he is trying, trying pretty hard.

AG: And where is his prayers going? [laughing]

CM: Exactly.

AG: Like what are you praying for?

CM: Exactly.

AG: When I think about the story of the women pitying the men, in our origin creation story, that says a lot.

CM: That says a lot.

AG: Because we are always getting criticized, I don't know if it's Indian women, or Blackfoot women, that we spoil our boys and our men, but the girls, and I see it for myself, everything goes to my oldest. He's, one of it is to survive adolescence, and get off on his own and to make that happen for him, but it's also he can ask me for anything and he's going to get it .... We need to be needed [laughing]. We spoil our kids right? My mom would talk about how her generation was so in poverty and had so nothing. Then it turns to indulgence, we are going to indulge, indulge our children for what we never had and we are seeing the effect of that in everything, I see it, in my generation and below. That women thing, we are always told that as Blackfoot women, you can't do the ceremony without the woman, she has to be here, and for very much the same reasons the Sioux value their women, the women are the life givers, the women hold that sacredness, they don't need a pipe, they don't need anything, they have everything inside, they're gifted, we the men are pitiful, we have to sweat, we have to have pipe, blah blah blah. We have to do all this to be equal as you, is the general description. Are we seeing that entirely? Well no, because we are still sifting through our survival, we are re-creating our worldview again

CM: That's a good title, sifting through our survival, I better write that down.

AG: Oh I've been studying that stuff forever [laughing] survival! I guess from the women's side, and yeah, we have touched on that after we broke our last interview, you said I'm glad you're getting the female side, because there's difference here, and I said wait Carol, don't start I have to get you on the recording. But we did get to that point of that gender specific stuff, which is why I felt it was very important to have in the study the women and the men, not just one or the other. So there is something to be said about that for wellbeing. I think if you want to say anymore on it you're welcome to.

CM: Well just looking at the balance of life, I think it's so true that your generation will help the men become better people as we did in the beginning of the *Napi* story. My daughter is like that. I'm trying to figure out what I'm doing, I guess as far as that. Because I had two sons and the older son has passed two years ago from alcoholism. It wasn't until after he was gone, my daughter who is a year older than he, geez mom, I never wanted to ask you this for anything, because you did everything for him, and I could see that I was putting burden on you guys, but that's what she chose to do. And my younger son is disable, and my husband one night called her and said I don't know if I'm supposed to go to horse therapy tonight, it seems like they're supposed to pick me up and she said I will call you right back, and she called over to Missoula and had 'em all jumping around and someone was going to pick him up because they had forgot, and that was my excuse, but they had forgotten to go after him, because he can't go on his own, he's not allowed. After I hung up, he goes, eww that's a spoiled kid, he said if he misses the bus in the morning, he calls you and you make sure he gets to work and he calls you now, but this was valid this time and he said you really spoil him, I said okay, so I do. And then my oldest grandson graduated from high school last year, so me and him travelled together this summer, just having a blast [laughing] but anyway he went to Idaho three weeks, and of course grandma gave him money because nobody else would [laughing] and it took everything I had to go are you okay? Pick up my phone. So anyway id hear them talking about it but I was listening to every sound, is he okay, and his mom is trying to do the independent thing [laughing]

AG: Yeah yeah.

CM: I just totally destroy that effort. [laughing]

AG: With my powerful grandma powers.

CM: Exactly. [laughing] finally Friday morning and he quietly called my phone and I answered and he said grandma, can you send some gas money, I have a ride home. Gee I whipped into town, I got the money wired even before I came to work [laughing]. He got home last night, but I thought okay I know what my mom's doing, because she's a single parent. She hasn't had support from either his real biological father or her daughters husband, who pretty much raised him to a certain age, and left. So she hasn't had someone to even give her 20 dollars a month and he's 19 years old. It was always convenient because grandma and grandpa were right there, so we kind of played that father role, the father responsibility not the role. So I can see what my daughters trying to do and I'm supportive of it but it's like I don't want it to be conflict the other way, of why can't I as a grandma as a grandma do what I want to do [laughing] you know what I'm saying.

AG: Want or need is the question. [laughing]

- CM: Want [laughing], it's so bad, I'm like my poor son has to catch rides, so last week we found a pick up that would be perfect for him [laughing]. ... if it's so wrong then why do we do it?
- AG: It seems so natural
- CM: It seems so natural huh, because she wants him to be responsible. But do we not want our males to be responsible. But I will say something that hasn't been thought through a whole lot, but my two sons are not able to help, if they were healthy and alive. Would I expect anything out of them? Would I just keep expecting them to look good? Like those big old elks looking good, and the cow just there. Or that green mallard duck looking all pretty, and that female just that kind of grey, not noticeable color. Is that what this world was?
- AG: Well, from an evolutionary perspective it was, for the animal kingdom, the males had to look the part to attract, to create. To create babies. In the human world?
- CM: So did Blackfoot live such, in a relationship connection back then, that we decorate them to ...
- AG: I guess personally we probably did because we mimicked what the natural world showed us, we learned from the animals, we learned from the environment and if you look at those pictures [laughing]
- CM: I think more importantly that's the visual
- AG: We allowed them to have many wives Carol [laughing] those buggers have been getting away with things forever [laughing]
- CM: Forever [laughing] oh there's my grandson with his second wife [laughing] well which one is this? Oh God [laughing] and we complain
- AG: It's very interesting to think if that perspective, a little bit of anthropological perspective, on the relationship and purposes and in terms of the wellbeing, I do believe in the philosophy that we have of moderation, of balance. We are only as good as our women, we are only as good as our men. And the reflection when I think about that house, when you said of that disturbing scenario, to me it's like your environment is always a reflection of your health. Our communities will show that. At least in Browning you have these more modern buildings, you have these initiatives, it's progressing. There's other communities that have ancient, like they haven't even evolved, they're so busy in all the other stuff. But you're going to, there's certain things that reflect what's going on inside of you, your health, your state of mind, and that's what I keep thinking about when I think about this woman. Is there absolutely no spirit in her. because even when I look at the good old Christian grandmas in our community, they're like spic and span, they're like perfection
- CM: They're all laced up.

- AG: Yeah! On either ends of those, to me that just tells me did she have nothing? Especially for your children. Your children, they come first.
- CM: See that's what bothered me about this setting. I thought the only chair there, he was sitting on it, watching TV. The little ones were all sitting on the floor. Mother was in the kitchen, there was nothing cooking. There was nothing going on. I don't know, I think sometimes, I guess I seen that for a reason. To keep me aware I guess. But on the other hand yeah, it's why doesn't she have any whatever it is? Whatever IT is. I use the word IT because it bothers me because it probably will make me go back and make me think about it now and try and describe it. My husband would always say what is it? What is IT? I kind of hate it when he talks like that [laughing]
- AG: Because it is many things, right and it's hard to articulate, it is strength, it is spirit, it is life, energy. All those things for her that it didn't have.
- CM: She didn't have it because if she did she would have been living.
- AG: I just keep thinking depression, depression, that state of mind, don't care, just here, just hovering around. But let's see if we can answer this, the prayer and wellbeing and I feel pretty good about what you said and like I said the discussion before it trickles through that. This question, how can understanding Blackfoot spirituality help counsellors serve Indigenous clients more effective, so how can understanding our ways, our spiritual ways in Blackfoot, help counsellors in general serve native clients, Blackfoot or not, just to serve?
- CM: You know when someone asks me for advice or prayer or help, I always in my mind, prepare myself, before that person leaves, they have an energy to move on. To move forward or make progress or whatever it is they're seeking. And you can almost feel that happening or not happening. It's like, as Martin Luther King would say, is giving hem hope, but I think it's more that hope, it's way more than hope. When I listen to what he was trying to express in the 60s, if I was a counsellor and someone came to me, and I go back to the sexual abuse thing, because I know in Canada they're going to hit on that one hard. And it can be used as a stumbling block and to absolutely not do anything, and hurt. But what if they looked at sexual relations as a sacred item. What if they said that was sacred. Who taught you it wasn't? we couldn't say that before the lawsuit right? We couldn't have that. But from now on we can look at sexual relations as sacred, a way of being, and then it's not treated for mostly violently, shamefully. What if we took those terms and begin to make them something positive? And so we don't just, the way I always think about a way to get through something difficult, like putting your feet in the ground and just dig in, and we take it into a new paradigm of sexuality for native women, and men and children and adults. Because when most of us grew up in a sort of Christian background, so it has a certain connotation, whether we want to admit it or not, it's what we learned in Christianity, that's still going on in our mind. Because we haven't stated it again in a new capacity. Maybe that's what you can help your colleagues contribute to

the redefining of that, restatement of sexuality or and abuse, violation of physically abuse, spiritual abuse. Maybe that's where we are really going when we are saying that energy that's going to come out, because you guys are all in that type of profession that people are looking to you for that, and maybe that will be your major contribution to your field of work. What if we looked at it in this light, what would this mean to you? Because you're a trained professional I'm talking to you about sexuality, but normally I wouldn't because people are very uncomfortable, and you, because you're a trained professional, I'm being more open about that.

AG: Because it's a big issue.

CM: It's a big issue.

AG: It trickles into everything, whether we would like to admit that or not. And it's everywhere whether we want to say that or not.

CM: Exactly, and that's where our communities wear silences. But you guys are going to be in a role, in a position because of what has happened in Canada, to take it and we come like this and let's say let's put a closure on that meaning in our society of Blackfoot people or native people and let's give it this. If we gave it this, all these people who have been hurt or shamed it may be able to dissolve because they now have a new focus. The one that wants a new ...

AG: Identity, a new identity to it, a new classification to it. It doesn't surprise me that you say that about changing its energy because when I heard you saying that, because in Blackfoot we only pray for the good, we only give our attention to the good. I think my problems I've had with western psychology is let's focus on the bad,

CM: Like you can fix bad, make bad better.

AG: Yeah bad is bad, and it has a whole teaching in itself, absolutely a teaching, and it's always kind of, maybe psychoanalysis is about going back, taking things apart, sifting through them and acknowledging all the pieces of that and I'm thinking what the hell is that going to do, you're going to take me back to places. And in some instances it's very necessary, because of blocked memory and all sorts of things.

CM: Unlocking those doors.

AG: Yeah awareness right. But in some situations you're thinking it's not really good for me to do that, I need something now. That really speaks volumes about what you were saying about let's look at a new paradigm. Let's make this relationship well, let's make this relationship with sexuality healthy. That book I was mentioning, Fools Crow, about the massacre. I was reading it and Amethyst had said maybe you want to look at this book because it really talks about the lifestyle, the communal lifestyle, the value system, prayer, they just prayed all the time,

everything was prayer and it was really nice that way, but there was another part of it that was really sexual, and I told her and I was reading it, and I said I can't teach this to my students because they talk about sex here and there, and she said sex is healthy! Talking about sex is healthy! What we're not doing, what you're feeling is that sin, let's not talk about it. That Christianization, as much as I say I'm not Christian, it filters through and comes out once in a while

CM: It does!

AG: And I always question this with our ceremony, because they say you cover up right down to your ankles and show nothing!

CM: Is that really?

AG: Yeah so I got a lot of questions around stuff because I'm always observing.

CM: You look at it, those hides that those women wore, fit the body.

AG: Yes it did.

CM: They enhanced the body.

AG: They showed the curves.

CM: They did.

AG: They did because you looked at it and it was beautiful.

CM: It was beautiful.

AG: A woman's body to look at, it is beautiful.

CM: I kind of started hitting on it a couple years ago, I said it would be nice of our girls, if they could get into such physically good shape that would make the body look nice, it would be beautiful. Because going back to the buckskin dress, the fitting. What's this all this big baggy block stuff, I'm like God we are exciting [laughing]

AG: No wonder they wanted more wives. [laughing]

CM: This was called the block. [laughing]

AG: I feel there is so much truth to looking good in the marriage still or having that healthy sexual life. Because we see so much infidelity because of the loss of that, that connection that you have sexually is very important and draws you into each other literally. [laughing]

CM: And you think about that. We lost the child, I can still remember doing some classes over here and people were like, oh God, did we actually have child birth?

Well yeah we had to. Like me I can think like that. But these people were like oh my God we just didn't have kid after kid, and I think when you're in physical condition, your body is as healthy as reproduction as can be, and yes women are more prone to becoming pregnant than others. But this is a part of Blackfoot society that is not discussed. We learn jealousy really good.

AG: Yeah.

CM: That almost took the energy part of the good we had. Just like you're saying, I think it's really important to take care of oneself. Like people make comments about my husband's really starch shirts, and he likes it like that, and we found a laundry that can do that [laughing] it's not me at home, so he can look good....

AG: What does prayer speak about wellbeing?

CM: The prayer is that the person who is asking, that whatever is best for them will come to be. So in that sense sometimes as a human being, we may not recognize at the moment what is best for us. But the prayer is the energy moving to put that person in the right direction. The right direction meaning whatever is best for them, in the bigger picture of the world. So I guess for me that's where when, I guess that's how I am understanding the question, is that we are directing the wellbeing of a person. We never pray for negative, for things that are not good. So sometimes people will say, they will use that saying, be careful what you ask for, you just might get it. So what might feel like challenging, future? People use another cliché. God will never give you what you can't handle, but sometimes the comfort of doing the easier thing, I think people will wonder why they didn't get that.

AG: What do you mean?

CM: Say if we are praying for what's best for a person, their wellbeing, some people are intelligent and they don't know that they are. So they will be put into challenging, intellectual situations. Other people just have this personality type where people are drawn to them and they don't think they have the energy to give and they do. Sometimes a person thinks they know what they need, but prayer will direct it to. I'm not sure if prayer is even accurate in that sense, but it makes you become a more complete fuller human being. So when we are talking about prayer in relation to the wellbeing of a person, it's giving the person the encouragement and the energy to become somebody that they will appreciate in the long run, not necessarily, sometimes it's immediate, but sometimes it's just overall satisfaction of life.

AG: So sometimes people go and make specific prayers, and sometimes it's related to somebody else. We talked about those Vows for someone that may be sick or whatnot, but sometimes it's specific to the individual, they're praying for themselves, from what I gather from what you just said, they may not get what they prayed for? But they will get what they need?



- CM: Yeah they will move toward, it's really what they need but they don't recognize it.
- AG: Something else recognizes it.
- CM: Yeah. But in the end, when they get to the end of their life and they will look back and say I would have never went that direction. But after I went to this person and they prayed for me it seems like my life just gravitated that way.
- AG: Okay.
- CM: Sometimes people don't recognize their own abilities, their own gifts.
- AG: So what does that say, that whole understanding you just said, like you said in your last interview, be specific in your prayers. Be specific in what you are asking for?
- CM: The person you go to is important. I can't say that I know what everybody prays for, that would just be way off. But this is what I pray for when people ask me. So when we say be specific, it gives the person you're asking prayers for, an indication of where they're coming from. What is it that seems so important at the moment? So to me that's how I would say that. Someone may come to me and they may say I want this, this is what I think I should be doing. But all it really is it's explaining to the person where that person's at, you know. So the relationship can be better. Than just, in a sense, if I just had someone come to me and say pray for me. I could just pray for them. But then you don't really know where they are at. And I have people say I had this person pray for me and nothing really seemed to happen. And I'm like, well I'm sure something happened. But I'm not sure it's what they wanted or had in their mind and never expressed. So in that term be specific, it's just getting to know a person. So if my spirit and that person's spirit, who's asking for prayers, if our spirits can connect, we can see way broader for where we are headed than the human physical moment, that's kind of my belief
- AG: Yeah, yeah.. you just touched on something. It depends on who you go to for prayers. I really believe that to be true. A lot of times our people might just be directed, go see this person. They're strong, or they hold this or that. But what else, is it important to have a relationship outside of that circle. Tell me a little bit of what you meant by that.
- CM: Some people are just gifted I think, with just having a pure spirit, a pure heart. They aren't always necessary in ceremony. Like maybe I don't know that this is always the case, but an example I would say is, say you take a lady, she's a young girl, she becomes a teenager, 20s, 30s, grows. She becomes a grandma. And it doesn't have to do with chronological age, but a relationship. Say most people, we are pretty happy if we see an elderly lady. The majority of them seem really, there's just a softness about them, kind good feeling.
- AG: Yeah.

CM: I think that's kind of what I'm saying. Of course grandmas are really responsible to their family. So are grandpas. I guess where I was kind of going with that is, some grandmothers in our generation, all era, were not allowed to practice their ceremonies. But they have that same thing.

AG: Yeah.

CM: They have that same thing. You can go to them and you're like gee, she just walks around like she's nobody and here she's so smart, you know, and that's what I'm talking about. It's like, it's as important in my mind, to know those kind of people.

AG: Right.

CM: Because we have had such an interruption of our culture and ways, and but the people are still there and they all survived through the same horrific life that we come from. So I guess it's, I think when because they haven't been introduced, or because they have been taught to fear our ways, doesn't make their prayer any less. But you can tell, if they start running down this one, and running down that one, it's kind of like well they aren't that open either. But I think if they say, their doing their best over there, why did you come to me? Well you can tell that's a good person.

AG: Humble, the humility part.

CM: Yeah. So I think when we are talking about who we can go to, sometimes it can just be a child too. You know they are so pure huh? They just kind of set us straight every now and then. You can tell when the message is, you're looking at the kid saying my god, how did that wisdom come out of that mouth [laughing]. So I think that those types of relationships to be open to. I think that people who are fortunate enough to take that challenge of becoming in ceremony, because that was critical...over here if you got involved in ceremony, it wasn't too popular here, as a matter of fact, the oppressive Christian issues that they had with us, if they could cut off our ceremony, then they could change us. Its quote prevalent here, it was even way more prevalent, it's lessening now. People are getting to see that. That acceptance of other ways you know. You can still get there. Different ways.

AG: Well I see it in the college driving up, and seeing the signs, Painted Beaver Lodge, and I thought ugh how beautiful! What a beautiful place to come to everyday and have those words, those names, showing themselves and if people have a bit of more understanding of where they come from, just even the more greater appreciation to see it celebrated and being tangible, alongside an educational institution. So it's really beautiful, it's really nice to pull up and see that. I wish our communities had more of those.

CM: Yeah and you will get there, you will get there. It may not be exactly the same, but I think that's what we leave for creativity and innovation.

AG: Creativity is not far away from Creator. So in talking about prayer and wellbeing. It comes down to where you're stepping into the spiritual realm, whatever that is, ceremony, discussion, uh visiting like you had mentioned, people outside of the transferred rites process. Getting involved in that, I guess intimate setting, to pray for things to come into one's life in a positive manner. Then it's really left up to the faith process. Is that what you're saying?

CM: Yes.

AG: I'm going to give this up and Creator is going to bless me in way I need, it's obvious or indirect or direct, today or maybe down the road. But there's no, I want to say science to it, because there is a bit of science. But it's actually, there's no ABCD

CM: No.

AG: Kind of steps, predictability.

CM: No, no. because the person who is praying for you has faith in their prayers they're giving. But the person receiving the prayers has to have faith in their self and their responsibility. In order for it to go. I know like before I used to be real shy. I make reference to shy in a sense that I was very extremely careful where I went and approached people and were around people. And if people challenged what I had to say, I would sense inside I got more determined. More determined to make something come true that I believed in. That has a lot to do with, just like you said there's really no scientific description to it, but there are things like that, your personal self-determination. And then the other part of it too, when I was growing up they would say oh she's so nice, I she will never get mad, she's so nice. That's how I grew up around my own family. Then my dad started telling them, and people would almost be like well lets just see if we can get her and. And my dad would just say, don't get her mad, she's one you don't want to get mad. Because that self-determination can be the other way

AG: She will really flip out. [laughing]

CM: Yeah! So when we talk about that, when a person takes on a challenge, it's really inside the determination. People want so much to have someone, someone to see that determination.

AG: So you're saying there's like a personality determinant here?

CM: Yes.

AG: At least that's what is coming to mind. That can shift things, personality. Can be either very open and receiving, or it can be... we have a lot of critical minds out there amongst our people. If we are so special, or if our culture is so special, then let me see the magic, let me see the sparks, let me see something. I've heard that before from people, the skeptics.

- CM: Yeah yeah, they want people to hold the hot rocks in their hands and in their mouth sort of things.
- AG: Yeah! Kind of the stereotypes. And I'm talking about more transcendence of this realm, this conscious realm, but when I talk about personality I guess you mentioned that. You as an individual, can be receptive or non-receptive to the prayers or the forces that come out of that whole ceremony or prayer process. Does that make sense?
- CM: Yeah. What it made me think of when you were talking about it is a person will go to someone and ask them to pray for them ok? But it's really the person the asking, who's going through the value search. And what they stand for creates determination. That's why I used that word determination. Because say someone told you, well you should go do this, you're not just going to just go do it, just because you were told to do it. You're going to search. You're going to search yourself and say if I do that, I am taking this step towards something. I don't know what's being stepped towards, this something. I think that's why I call it value, it's personal value clarification. Because you're kind of coming into a responsibility that maybe a person could have been avoiding. But they have to take a stand. Because even, if you think about a little child, people pray for them. You treat them good and they will follow along, and do what they're going to do, but some days they will just, "No! I don't want to do that." And you just figure how does that little tiny human being have so much know of what they want to do. And we take it lightly because they are a kid. But as an adult, say you took a 60-year old person and they said, "No I don't want to do that." Is it the same as that little five year old saying no I don't want to do that? So when we are looking at that determination, self-value, understanding, what's okay to do. To me that's where I wouldn't think of that example, unless you asked me a question like that. Like of the 60-year old and the five-year old, no I don't want to do it. And the 60-year old will be saying, "Over my life time, I've earned all these thing, I'm comfortable like this." But a five year old saying, "No I don't want to do this, it's like: How do they know that; how would they know?" You know their values at the time is like we have to raise this child to become this 60-year old, but yet they're telling us that at that age...but I guess when you said it back to me, you made me think if using the word, this person is going to have to go inside and ask themselves am I comfortable doing it. Comfortable in the sense, if I do that and something good happens, then I might go back and do another step. Or I might just be comfortable backward. So I think when we're looking at how does prayer direct that, it's what best for the person.
- AG: So sometimes we don't need to push ourselves to face things fears, uncomfortable situations. I mean from a therapeutic standpoint, that's kind of what therapy is about, is pushing the client to get past places of anxiety, things that are fearful, facing fears. Talking and addressing impacts from childhood that they never wanted to talk about, that's kind of what, at least western therapeutics kind of mandate. So with, from this side, to me that's all I kept thinking is, well why don't you want to do that, the 60-year old man, what are you not wanting to face.

And at that point, a lot of things my mom didn't want to talk about, and she was going to be 58, that part of her life I just kind of stopped, I didn't make her open up anything or go there, so what she left with this world, was what she was comfortable with I guess and that's a good thought for me, is that she wasn't all torn up inside. A lot of this stuff residential school things, right? I think that's a real big issue right now, at least in the communities up North, lets open Pandora's box and start talking about it. But it's not happening at this mass level like people aren't talking about sexual abuse, trauma, they're not talking about those things because I don't know if we have those resources or abilities or safety nets or whatever, comfort zones, safe zones for them to that, and there's particular people doing it but not at the masses.

CM: Yeah, now the healing level that people wanted, or had hoped for, we had hoped for, yeah. You know because I think when you use it in a context of that, I guess the question to the therapeutic counsellor would be what good does it do, say if a 58-year old lady, to tell someone I've been sexually abused? Is the intent to, is there some sort of now it's okay that I said it? Or this hindered me from developing through life, this scared me. I couldn't have healthy relationships, you know from this. I think that's where I've been wondering how that's going to evolve over there. Because a lot of the stuff that I hear, I don't know the field that well, but the stuff that I hear is, you know these people are going there, and it's coming out to be a monetary push. That if you give me 50 thousand dollars, somehow I'm going to overcome the things that happened to me in boarding school. And granted I haven't thought through it a lot, but I thought through it because I have been going up North for a *looong* time, very actively since 1982, and actively, I mean regularly. If I had to do the average, I would say maybe at least once a month, from 1982 to present.

AG: That's quite a bit.

CM: I guess one of the things is economically, when I say economically, the money will help. Maybe the poverty that was created because of the inhibitions of the people who were abused, be it physical or spiritually or socially, sexually. I guess it's kind of reminds me of here when no matter how hard things are all year, at Christmas we get a *per capita*. I think the lowest it's ever been is 17 dollars and the highest it's ever been is 100. But it's amazing when that week is coming along, and everyone is going to pick up their per capita check, how the energy level comes about, so I don't see anything wrong with that monetary thing, I don't see it as being a wrong. I think maybe it's an indicator of hope, maybe that's what it is. That's what I see with the per capita. I was teaching school, I taught the seventh grade for three years and sixth grade for one, over here we have an enrollment, you belong to the tribe as a tribal- recognized member, or as somebody who belonged to the tribe. My last year teaching to those who were enrolled, was a time of hope. But my last year of teaching I brought it up, and I wanted to see how it's effecting the younger people who were not allowed to be enrolled, and I said how many of you are going to get your per capita next week? And I was very shocked and this would have been the Christmas of 2003, I was

very shocked to see that only a couple kids in there knew they were going to get a per capita, others didn't even know what a per capita was and so it was an avoidance of the fact that those children did not belong to the tribe. I kind of sorted it, their parents, than rather than have them see pain, about not being included, they just don't even bring it up.

AG: Or their parents were pocketing it.

CM: And don't want it to know.

AG: When you brought up the monetary thing, with the residential school pay out. It's that third variable that's really going to mess with the research and findings. Because like you said there is an option and the date has passed, September, this past September, to file a claim, a personal claim, for the survivors who want to tell their story and they're kind of basing it on the severity of the abuse and you will get a payout according to that; so, they have quantified our pain, which I have a lot of issues with that, as you can understand that. They have quantified our experiences again with their western ways of knowing. Our people have learned to have to survive and that sometimes it's questionable manners, manipulation, knowing how to get things, I hear it everyday when I walk into the office. My kids got taken away, we got no groceries, blah blah blah, can I have 20 bucks, those kind of things. I think this is another difficult thing we are going to have to try and get through because people are going to know be, there's the sincere ones and then there's ones that you know, but who are any of us to say who's who. They are doing it for their own reasons, but it's going to, I guess when I say the findings and the research for somebody like myself, the work that I do is to deal with those aftermaths of colonization, the aftermath of genocide that we have survived. I have worked to deal with those behaviours and will continue to work with that, that decolonization effort. And that's why prayer is important for me to articulate and understand, because to me that's the life force for us, of healing. Many people because of our evolution now as, if we look at it on a scale and I think of it on this scale, from totally assimilated and colonized to traditional, we are kind of in that scale of thought, mindset somewhere along that. I guess for some people a lot of our young people, a lot haven't made up their minds and the search will continue until they're older and they finally say, "Okay yeah. I want to participate." I see the beauty here. But then there is a lot who I find who go to university, post-secondary, and they start to get a little bit of understanding, the paradigm, the world view, those things, and they say wow this is really something special and unique. This is something worth holding onto and learning more about and eventually participating in, and some just don't care.

CM: I wonder about that, say those who just never filled that piece of that bucket, that empty bucket. In life where will they, if they go through life with that one bucket always empty, how can it be? How can it be that a person truly come into this world and totally exist? I don't know if the term is spiritual, because they have to on the other hand, when I think about the healing process that is expected to go on, because it's actually been confronted. Whether it's openly confronted or a

closed room with a counselling, or a professionally of some type or an elder, meaning a ceremonialist type person. Wherever it was confronted, or are native people going to go on to be what? As Dr. Little Bear says, what is that collective agreement? That we are striving for as a Blackfoot person. We need to define that collective agreement and then we need to agree to it, and that collective agreement will be the difficult one. But if you think back, I try to think back to what we would think of being our pure culture, before contact, and when we say contact I really think, I don't know if we are afraid to just say it out, before contact with the white man, before contact with the yellow man, before contact with the black man, or is should be saying person, black person. But we sort of had this idea, who was our contact with then? Should we go to that idea and discuss our collective agreement. On the outside we probably wore buckskin clothing, but there was something more than that and if there wasn't then we are just really chasing a dream that ain't there. But I don't think that we as Blackfoot people would say that, oh no that ain't true, because we had a life, we had a full society and everything that people strive for today, justice and liberty for all as they say in the states, social justice, just all types. So we make this assumption that back in the days before all this contact, we had all this. And yet could contact have changed us to such a great great deal? That we are struggling to go back in, and define this. Some people just say oh you just live in a fantasy of good and you just think that everything should be good, and I don't see anything wrong with that! Some people have to have that bad, uncomfortable. So I thought about, you know like you said when your mom passed and you were comfortable with where she was comfortable, but in your real thinking do you often wonder or wish for her to have something she couldn't even have defined

AG: Absolutely. I spent a lot of years trying to get her healthy, she was diabetic .... Of course I wanted more for her. When I started moving into ceremony in my mid 20s, she was not against it at all. She pulled it into her organization, they would have all night smokes, she had a bundle that was made for the organization, it was in her board room. She wanted that, she wanted something out of it. But I think somewhere there was a level of discomfort that she didn't feel she couldn't be a part of it. That's all I can think when I think why didn't she go fully into it. Whereas I just jumped right into it. It was great, filling gaps I had all my life and I don't know if until she saw that in me, that she started finally participating at different levels.

CM: You made it comfortable for her?

AG: I think so.

CM: Because then she didn't have to say I'm stepping up and doing this, she could say I'm supporting Angela, although for her it was self-serving and self-satisfying for sure.

AG: Oh yeah. The last part, when she was doing her masters, she was doing it with this collaborated program between Blue Quills and the Univerity of Calgary. And the

Blue Quills, what they added, even though they were Cree, and us Blackfoot have our...

CM: Our thing? [laughing]

AG: ...our thing, yes that's a nice thing of putting it. She would come home and say, "Oh look this is what we did, we made this rattle and we made this..." and man, she was full of life with these things and she didn't care where she got it and I saw that! And she valued what she was learning intellectually and the worldview and the ceremonies were being articulated academically. And that's where she got alive and that's where she came alive. And I spent years trying to share my learning, from Native American studies to ceremonies, but she was probably taking it in, but it was her own experience that she needed to go through, she needed to have, to connect, to hear.

CM: Meaningful, it had to be meaningful.

AG: Exactly. That was a very important part of this, was that you had to find your own meaning right, to step into this?

CM: You can't do it just as ritual, as step one-two-three. If you did it like that it would be so meaningless. I think that's where, even though we like to condemn, I guess what Christianity imposed in their minds, Christianity also gave them those steps that they also needed at that time because they couldn't have these other steps no matter what. I think, for me, I would, listening to what you're saying, one of the things, I don't think you could just exist as a void human being. So somehow, even though we are mad at assimilation and genocide and colonization, some of that was being met. Some of it being met. What I think angered me when I started trying to sort through it is we could be just a laughing out loud person, or we could just have a light giggle, and maybe that's what irritates that. Is that maybe we have to have the light giggle instead of the laughing out loud, enjoying life. What I first seen what the LOL means. I didn't know what it means and I go oh I wish I knew how to understand text stuff [laughing] I didn't know what it meant, and I went I wonder what LOL means. So one day I asked the kids. Like just now we laughed, we laughed. But you think about our mothers, maybe our grandmothers, they just got to have a silent smile. They couldn't laugh out loud. From now on when you text, every time when you put LOL [laughing], we will know that we have grown. We will know that word a little bit more free and that in itself is sacred. I think when we talk about all this healing that people are going to go through, when they are laughing out loud, they're right on the path to healing. But I remember the ladies when I was a little girl growing up, I grew up out by the Big Badger, Heart Butte area, and those women all covered their mouth when they laughed. Just hiding themselves, their expression. When I think you hear these people really laugh, then whatever it is you're doing is working.



- AG: That's wellbeing, that's a part of wellbeing. We hear that a lot, about laughing being good medicine, but the way you just articulated it, really I think just explained it for me anyway. That freedom!
- CM: That freedom, it's freedom to do that. If you ever do that in your community, when someone is feeling very healed, you will make them really uncomfortable when you start laughing, joking. Not you but you know what I'm saying.
- AG: Yeah I know what you're saying.
- CM: They will be like what's wrong? You will see their reaction. And today we described it as confidence. Confidence is used. But really it's happiness, it's freedom. I think as more people become decolonized they will appreciate that behaviour. The way it's being appreciated today.
- AG: It's kind of like taking the uptight colonial out of our existence [laughing] and making it down to earth and natural again.
- CM: Natural! It's that era I use when I put my hands like this, and I call it before contact. We made it, we made it full circle. And through all the contact we have had we have had an experience, but we just don't want to do it the same, we don't want to become the colonizers. We show people, and they say, "Oh those stoic *Piikani* women." [laughing] They will say, "God they're fun to be around, we should just be like them!" That's what we are striving for, for our own people. And then in turn everybody...
- AG: Building better relationships. So that's, when I guess when we talk about what does prayer speak about wellbeing, I keep getting back, I used that word and I was driving over here and I was thinking maybe I used the wrong word, prayer, but you understood what I mean by that.
- CM: Yeah.
- AG: Whereas other people will say, like a religious prayer, but prayer means like everything and I'm glad that you understand. And I was thinking on my way over, being so specific and I feel like I'm never going to ask the right questions and I'm going to go back and say I should said this and I will probably never stop interviewing. [laughing] But the wellbeing, you talked about it being equivalent to spiritual happiness, in the first interview, and the spiritual confidence, or that confidence, those are really big themes and that comes with happiness, comes with the laughing, and confidence comes with, I guess, feeling good with the values you live by and strive by and work to attain and hold onto, or buy into.
- CM: Right, buy into...and it's the same with crying. For me, this was kind of one that really I've been so gifted in life to have so many blessings of good. When I lost my father and my two grandfathers, and my grandmother, pretty close together, I didn't even know that I would, I didn't even know the degree to what a person could block, their emotion. But I couldn't see it within myself, but I could see it in

other people. I don't know if you ever have experienced, I'm sure you have, you've gone to a funeral and people will be crying but they will still be standing there holding themselves and tears will be running down. And it's so calming in our community. And it's almost like okay, well what are you afraid to cry for? And I remember the first time I asked myself that question, I thought to myself, I shouldn't even be here, because I can't even, I went there out of respect, respect for kind of like, to pray I guess that this person goes on to a good place and everybody there doesn't fall apart in life because they've lost someone. But I remember the first time I thought that, I thought, *Oh God, why do I always have to be thinking, I didn't want to be thinking*, I wanted to go ahead and try and feel, but I didn't have the same feeling and I looked around and I saw them standing there and I thought holy smokes our people can hurt so bad and have no freedom to express it. And I remember the first time I saw it and I thought this is so sad, and I mean, sad upon sad. I'm sad here for the people who don't have the freedom to feel bad, to hurt, to let that pain do what it needs to do to get out. Because it took me almost 25 years to acknowledge that the pain that I could hold in. and so I guess what I'm thinking of is like when we use that word freedom. Freedom to feel, freedom to know. And in your field of work, you've probably hear this a lot, like I've had men talk to me too, but women of course are more comfortable because we are women. But as soon as they begin to feel, they will wipe their tears away and they will say, here I am just trying to cry. Why should I? God I'm just crying and taking up your time, and all of a sudden they will become self-conscious of their freedom, and to me it's when they do that, that's when I get uncomfortable because I don't want them to think I am the colonizer. I want them to know, hey just cry, open your mouth and cry, and no one is going to hit you, no one is going to say anything mean to you. But if you don't cry, it's kind of pointless coming here today because you're not making movement in your personal freedom. I think wellbeing has a lot to do with personal freedom.

AG: Wow that's huge. I used to tell myself that the only way to tell someone is being real is when is if they are crying or laughing, because that's when your spirit is speaking honestly, because we see so many masks, trying to be tough, strong, and what's that all about is that embedded fear, that colonial fear. I think you mentioned your grandpa's sister, when you went to talk to her about the Bakers Massacre, and she was still... wouldn't talk about it because she said the bulls are going to come, they are going to hear.

CM: Yes! Years and years.

AG: I was so disturbed with that thinking and thinking of oh my gosh. I take it for granted my expression and my level of healing and my evolution along the decolonization spectrum I guess. But when I think about that level of fear our people are living at, and it's horrifying. And it is sad, sad on top of sad, because you want them to be happy, you love them that much. To be in this world, in their world, their land and to, they're the ones who should be the happiest.

CM: Right.

- AG: And they're the ones who are the most unhappy, at some levels I should say. And that whole fear concept and freedom versus fear, well that's definitely a concept that I'm going to really really think about.
- CM: It's almost like generational avoidance. I've never said those words together before but what you're saying and what we are talking about made me think about generational avoidance. Because this lady raised some children and one would have been her nephew, one would have been her granddaughter, those two I really associate really close with her. I didn't know it was her nephew, I thought it was her son, because all my life I knew her as her son. But it's like they're missing a piece of peace in life. Like a piece P-E-A-C-E that they can't get it. The other one is my age exactly, 58. She's a mother too. And her whenever I try and sit and visit with her, she starts breathing really uncomfortable, and she's a successful career woman. She has a home, she can take care of herself. But when you get her in a room, say if each one of these chairs were filled with a Blackfoot Indian woman, and she would start to talk, you would notice her breathing changes so drastically and I just go just relax, it's just us, it's just us at the very basic level. You don't have to do anything but be us. But I think it came from that, that fear, was so dominating. As I was waking up this morning and they were talking on TV and it had to do with the big deal of the Martin Luther King statue yesterday, and I woke up and I was kind of hearing it, listening to it, what they were reporting and they said something about fear is, and this part I'm stumbling, what I remember thinking is my God, these people on TV do they even know what fear in this country is? You know, because it was of course national news reporters and they were saying something about, the fear back then, they kind of went back to the 60s movement, of civil rights movement of the black people. And I was just lying there, I think that's why I can't remember, because I thought I got to get up because I can't lay here and listen to these people talk about this fear and they make it sound like it's an acceptable reference I guess to make people want to move, get up and make movement. And I think that's why I jumped up and got out of bed, and I felt myself kind of you know. [laughing]
- AG: Getting fired up? [laughing]
- CM: Yeah. Because the last thing was you don't have to do that, you can just be peaceful and I was like...
- AG: I don't know. [laughing]
- CM: and when I gear something like that I'm like get up Carol, you can't just let that go by.
- AG: And my friend, Taiaiake Alfred, a hev you read any of his books?
- CM: No.
- AG: He's a Mohawk and he's out at the university of Victoria, and in his speeches and he says, if you don't get fired up, then what kind of Indian are you?

CM: Yeah!

AG: Because people say, oh I'm not political, our whole existence is political. In a sense of what we have got to go through, in everything about us, every cell in us, these generations are awake and alive, and if you're not then what's wrong? You're shut off, and I say that a lot with our young people. And sometimes the olders, they are inactive, they sit back, they watch things happen, they aren't really doing much to benefit any causes, anything! they aren't in ceremony, they are just kind of there for themselves. Kind of that mentality, of no waves. Don't want any done for me and I don't want any into anyone else, and that's a trauma based identity right? But I think of how could you not be a part of something, whether it's on or off reserve, to push our causes ahead, to be a voice, to heal, to decolonize or whatever.

CM: You made me think of a voice, it comes to me now and then. I'm not a feminist, but I have some ideas about that. But talking about prayer and wellbeing. And I hope when I say this I really express what I mean. The women seem to have a really key role in making our wellbeing in what we want it to be in making what we want it to be in our society. But what you made me think about was that there was this guy, in my mind he was coming there praying all the time, or in Maslow's hierarchy of needs or the Blackfoot hierarchy of needs, you know what I'm saying, there are certain needs that have to be met to serve and self-actualize and all that. Well as far as I knew, everybody kind of had this common understanding of prayer, that yes you have to take care of your own needs so you can take care of other peoples' needs. Well anyway, one day I got lost, I was looking for a house and I went to the wrong house and I went to this guy's house who was in the same society as we were. And I'm not kidding you Angela, I was so disturbed, I dint do anything about it other than pray for them, real briefly because I was so shocked, I was shocked! And then disturbed later as I realized that I just didn't think it should be like that. Went in his house, it reminded me of a little room with grey walls. There was one wooden chair with the back broken off of it, he was sitting on it, watching this little black and white TV, this big, and the little grandkids were sitting next to him on the floor and the house was not clean at all. I mean there wasn't even an attempt in my mind, to pick up the garbage trash. The mother, his wife, was there. She was not in the society with us, ok. And I really really questioned if she was, would that scene have been different? And I'm not saying that woman's prayer is more important than male prayer, I'm not even going in that direction. But I thought about that a few times, because this person, him, has been in that constant, in that society for probably over the last over 25 years.

AG: Wow.

CM: And the mother has never been in there, or his significant other. It makes me wonder. If she had, would she have become more determined, more confident? Is that, I listen to Allan Pard and my husband John, a few of the men, every now and then, will have a discussion about how important the woman's role is. And they

have trouble expressing it, I hear their little struggle they are having, but the best they can come up with is, I know they can come up with more, the best they come up with is we can't have any of this without the woman. And I know what they're doing and their taking their male chauvinistic ways to day that [laughing] because these are some proud men, who've done what they've done. But going back to that example

AG: Who are still trying to self-actualize. [laughing]

CM: But going back to that example, had that woman, sometimes I think I wish I had lots of time in my day, I'd like to go up there, not as an experiment, to know if that home is still the same. Because I felt, I just thought, God you did this to me because you know I'm trying to find this house, and it wasn't that house I was looking for, you did this to me, you exposed me to this for what reasons, and today is the first time I dealt with that, just now when I told you. If that woman got involved, would it take that for them to feel that freedom that we talk about?

AG: Yeah that's pretty shocking.

CM: Oh it is. I was just disgusted to be honest.

AG: It just doesn't make sense hey?

CM: I was just disgusted I was like, *what?* And I was, *My God!* All we want is clean, they had water running in the sink, so they could have had clean in the sense of that. So anyway, so when we talk about prayer and wellbeing, is it the woman's responsibility to do that? In Blackfoot world?

AG: To do what?

CM: To be so responsible, to be so confident, so determined that our society will. I don't know the *Napi* stories very well, but this one I've heard, remember when the men lived alone and the women lived alone, and then the women pitied the men and then they, I think then we became living together. Could it be so, in this example of this house, that's the men living, and the woman's living, so why is her house like that? Why isn't her house nice? So when you're thinking of your work and all the people who are healing with all the traumas of life, you will have to remember this story, and not that it's all on the woman, that's not what I'm saying. But what role is that to acknowledge. Because I would guess he is trying, trying pretty hard.

AG: And where is his prayers going? [laughing]

CM: Exactly.

AG: Like what are you praying for?

CM: Exactly

- AG: When I think about the story of the women pitying the men, in our origin creation story, that says a lot.
- CM: That says a lot
- AG: Because we are always getting criticized, I don't know if it's Indian women, or Blackfoot women, that we spoil our boys and our men, but the girls, and I see it for myself, everything goes to my oldest. He's, one of it is to survive adolescence, and get off on his own and to make that happen for him, but it's also he can ask me for anything and he's going to get it... We need to be needed [laughing]. We spoil our kids right? My mom would talk about how her generation was so in poverty and had so nothing. Then it turns to indulgence, we are going to indulge, indulge our children for what we never had and we are seeing the effect of that in everything, I see it, in my generation and below. That women thing, we are always told that as Blackfoot women, you can't do the ceremony without the woman, she has to be here, and for very much the same reasons the Sioux value their women, the women are the life givers, the women hold that sacredness, they don't need a pipe, they don't need anything, they have everything inside, they're gifted, we the men are pitiful, we have to sweat, we have to have pipe, blah blah blah. We have to do all this to be equal as you, is the general description. Are we seeing that entirely? Well no, because we are still sifting through our survival, we are re-creating our worldview again.
- CM: That's a good title, sifting through our survival, I better write that down.
- AG: Oh I've been studying that stuff forever [laughing] survival! I guess from the women's side, and yeah, we have touched on that after we broke our last interview, you said I'm glad you're getting the female side, because there's difference here, and I said, "Wait Carol, don't start, I have to get you on the recording." But we did get to that point of that gender specific stuff, which is why I felt it was very important to have in the study, the women and the men, not just one or the other. So there is something to be said about that for wellbeing. I think if you want to say anymore on it you're welcome to.
- CM: Well just looking at the balance of life, I think it's so true that your generation will help the men become better people as we did in the beginning of the *Napi* story. My daughter is like that. I'm trying to figure out what I'm doing, I guess as far as that. Because I had two sons and the older son has passed two years ago from alcoholism. It wasn't until after he was gone, my daughter who is a year older than he, geez mom, I never wanted to ask you this for anything, because you did everything for him, and I could see that I was putting burden on you guys, but that's what she chose to do. And my younger son is disable, and my husband one night called her and said I don't know if I'm supposed to go to horse therapy tonight, it seems like they're supposed to pick me up and she said I will call you right back, and she called over to Missoula and had 'em all jumping around and someone was going to pick him up because they had forgot, and that was my excuse, but they had forgotten to go after him, because he can't go on his own,

he's not allowed. After I hung up, he goes, "Eww that's a spoiled kid." He said, "If he misses the bus in the morning, he calls you and you make sure he gets to work and he calls you now." But this was valid this time and he said, "You really spoil him." I said. "okay, so I do." And then my oldest grandson graduated from high school last year, so me and him travelled together this summer, just having a blast [laughing] but anyway he went to Idaho three weeks, and of course grandma gave him money because nobody else would [laughing] and it took everything I had to go are you okay? Pick up my phone. So anyway id hear them talking about it but I was listening to every sound, is he okay, and his mom is trying to do the independent thing. [laughing]

AG: Yeah yeah.

CM: I just totally destroy that effort. [laughing]

AG: With my powerful grandma powers.

CM: Exactly [laughing] finally Friday morning and he quietly called my phone and I answered and he said grandma, can you send some gas money, I have a ride home. Gee I whipped into town, I got the money wired even before I came to work [laughing]. He got home last night, but I thought okay I know what my mom's doing, because she's a single parent. She hasn't had support from either his real biological father or her daughters husband, who pretty much raised him to a certain age, and left. So she hasn't had someone to even give her 20 dollars a month and he's 19 years old. It was always convenient because grandma and grandpa were right there, so we kind of played that father role, the father responsibility not the role. So I can see what my daughters trying to do and I'm supportive of it but it's like I don't want it to be conflict the other way, of why can't I as a grandma as a grandma do what I want to do [laughing] you know what I'm saying.

AG: Want or need is the question. [laughing]

CM: Want, [laughing] it's so bad, I'm like my poor son has to catch rides, so last week we found pick-up that would be perfect for him. [laughing]... If it's so wrong then why do we do it?

AG: It seems so natural.

CM: It seems so natural huh, because she wants him to be responsible. But do we not want our males to be responsible. But I will say something that hasn't been thought through a whole lot, but my two sons are not able to help, if they were healthy and alive. Would I expect anything out of them? Would I just keep expecting them to look good? Like those big old elks looking good, and the cow just there. Or that green mallard duck looking all pretty, and that female just that kind of grey, not noticeable color. Is that what this world was?

- AG: Well, from an evolutionary perspective it was, for the animal kingdom, the males had to look the part to attract, to create. To create babies. In the human world?
- CM: So did Blackfoot live such, in a relationship connection back then, that we decorate them to...
- AG: I guess personally we probably did because we mimicked what the natural world showed us, we learned from the animals, we learned from the environment and if you look at those pictures. [laughing]
- CM: I think more importantly that's the visual.
- AG: We allowed them to have many wives. Carol! [laughing] Those buggers have been getting away with things forever. [laughing]
- CM: Forever. [laughing] Oh, there's my grandson with his second wife. [laughing] Well, which one is this? Oh God. [laughing] And we complain.
- AG: It's very interesting to think if that perspective, a little bit of anthropological perspective, on the relationship and purposes and in terms of the wellbeing, I do believe in the philosophy that we have of moderation, of balance. We are only as good as our women, we are only as good as our men. And the reflection when I think about that house, when you said of that disturbing scenario, to me it's like your environment is always a reflection of your health. Our communities will show that. At least in Browning you have these more modern buildings, you have these initiatives, it's progressing. There's other communities that have ancient, like they haven't even evolved, they're so busy in all the other stuff. But you're going to, there's certain things that reflect what's going on inside of you, your health, your state of mind, and that's what I keep thinking about when I think about this woman. Is there absolutely no spirit in her. because even when I look at the good old Christian grandmas in our community, they're like spic and span, they're like perfection.
- CM: They're all laced up.
- AG: Yeah! On either ends of those, to me that just tells me did she have nothing? Especially for your children. Your children, they come first.
- CM: See that's what bothered me about this setting. I thought the only chair there, he was sitting on it, watching TV. The little ones were all sitting on the floor. Mother was in the kitchen, there was nothing cooking. There was nothing going on. I don't know, I think sometimes, I guess I seen that for a reason. To keep me aware I guess. But on the other hand yeah, it's why doesn't she have any whatever it is? Whatever IT is. I use the word IT because it bothers me because it probably will make me go back and make me think about it now and try and describe it. My husband would always say what is it? What is IT? I kind of hate it when he talks like that. [laughing]



AG: Because IT is many things right and it's hard to articulate, it is strength, it is spirit, it is life, energy. All those things for her that IT, didn't have.

CM: She didn't have it because if she did she would have been living.

AG: I just keep thinking depression, depression, that state of mind, don't care, just here, just hovering around. But let's see if we can answer this, the prayer and wellbeing and I feel pretty good about what you said and like I said, the discussion before it trickles through that. This question, "How can understanding Blackfoot spirituality help counsellors serve Indigenous clients more effective, so how can understanding our ways, our spiritual ways in Blackfoot, help counsellors in general serve native clients, Blackfoot or not, just to serve?"

CM: You know when someone asks me for advice or prayer or help, I always in my mind, prepare myself, before that person leaves, they have an energy to move on. To move forward or make progress or whatever it is they're seeking. And you can almost feel that happening or not happening. It's like, as Martin Luther King would say, is giving hem hope, but I think it's more that hope, it's way more than hope. When I listen to what he was trying to express in the 60s, if I was a counsellor and someone came to me, and I go back to the sexual abuse thing, because I know in Canada they're going to hit on that one hard. And it can be used as a stumbling block and to absolutely not do anything, and hurt. But what if they looked at sexual relations as a sacred item. What if they said that was sacred. Who taught you it wasn't? we couldn't say that before the lawsuit right? We couldn't have that. But from now on we can look at sexual relations as sacred, a way of being, and then it's not treated for mostly violently, shamefully. What if we took those terms and begin to make them something positive? And so we don't just, the way I always think about a way to get through something difficult, like putting your feet in the ground and just dig in, and we take it into a new paradigm of sexuality for native women, and men and children and adults. Because when most of us grew up in a sort of Christian background, so it has a certain connotation, whether we want to admit it or not, it's what we learned in Christianity, that's still going on in our mind. Because we haven't stated it again in a new capacity. Maybe that's what you can help your colleagues contribute to the redefining of that, restatement of sexuality or and abuse, violation of physically abuse, spiritual abuse. Maybe that's where we are really going when we are saying that energy that's going to come out, because you guys are all in that type of profession that people are looking to you for that, and maybe that will be your major contribution to your field of work. What if we looked at it in this light, what would this mean to you? Because you're a trained professional I'm talking to you about sexuality, but normally I wouldn't because people are very uncomfortable, and you, because you're a trained professional, I'm being more open about that.

AG: Because it's a big issue.

CM: It's a big issue.

- AG: It trickles into everything, whether we would like to admit that or not. And it's everywhere, whether we want to say that or not.
- CM: Exactly, and that's where our communities wear silences. But you guys are going to be in a role, in a position because of what has happened in Canada, to take it and we come like this and let's say let's put a closure on that meaning in our society of Blackfoot people or native people and let's give it this. If we gave it this— all these people who have been hurt or shamed— it may be able to dissolve because they now have a new focus. The one that wants a new...
- AG: ...identity, a new identity to it, a new classification to it. It doesn't surprise me that you say that about changing. It's energy because when I heard you saying that, because in Blackfoot we only pray for the good, we only give our attention to the good. I think my problems I've had with western psychology is, let's focus on the bad.
- CM: Like you can fix bad, make bad better.
- AG: Yeah bad, is bad, and it has a whole teaching in itself, absolutely a teaching, and it's always kind of, maybe psychoanalysis is about going back, taking things apart, sifting through them and acknowledging all the pieces of that and I'm thinking what the hell is that going to do, you're going to take me back to places. And in some instances it's very necessary, because of blocked memory and all sorts of things.
- CM: Unlocking those doors.
- AG: Yeah, awareness right. But in some situations you're thinking it's not really good for me to do that, I need something now. That really speaks volumes about what you were saying about; let's look at a new paradigm. Let's make this relationship well, let's make this relationship with sexuality healthy. That book I was mentioning, *Fools Crow*, about the massacre. I was reading it and Amethyst had said maybe you want to look at this book because it really talks about the lifestyle, the communal lifestyle, the value system, prayer, they just prayed all the time; everything was prayer and it was really nice that way, but there was another part of it that was really sexual, and I told her and I was reading it, and I said I can't teach this to my students because they talk about sex here and there, and she said, "Sex is healthy! Talking about sex is healthy! What we're not doing, what you're feeling — is that sin — let's not talk about it. That Christianization, as much as I say, I'm not Christian, it filters through and comes out once in a while."
- CM: It does!
- AG: And I always question this with our ceremony, because they say you cover up right down to your ankles and show nothing!
- CM: Is that really?

- AG: Yeah so I got a lot of questions around stuff because I'm always observing.
- CM: You look at it, those hides that those women wore, fit the body.
- AG: Yes it did.
- CM: They enhanced the body.
- AG: They showed the curves.
- CM: They did.
- AG: They did because you looked at it and it was beautiful.
- CM: It was beautiful.
- AG: A woman's body to look at it is beautiful.
- CM: I kind of started hitting on it a couple years ago, I said it would be nice if our girls, if they could get into such physically good shape that would make the body look nice, it would be beautiful. Because going back to the buckskin dress, the fitting. What's this all this big baggy block stuff, I'm like God we are exciting. [laughing]
- AG: No wonder they wanted more wives. [laughing]
- CM: This was called the block. [laughing]
- AG: I feel there is so much truth to looking good in the marriage still or having that healthy sexual life. Because we see so much infidelity because of the loss of that, that connection that you have sexually is very important and draws you into each other literally. [laughing]
- CM: And you think about that; we lost the child, I can still remember doing some classes over here and people were like, oh God, did we actually have child birth? Well yeah, we had to. Like me, I can think like that. But these people were like, oh my God, we just didn't have kid after kid, and I think when you're in physical condition, your body is as healthy as reproduction as can be, and yes women are more prone to becoming pregnant than others. But this is a part of Blackfoot society that is not discussed. We learn jealousy, really good.
- AG: Yeah.
- CM: That almost took the energy part of the good we had. Just like you're saying, I think it's really important to take care of oneself. Like people make comments about my husband's really starch shirts, and he likes it like that, and we found a laundry that can do that. [laughing] It's not me at home, so he can look good....

CM: Him and my husband are really good friends and because of that friendship I got to know Leonard, ...and Allan was one of them, Allan's the quiet one; Jerry is more outspoken, and they kind of would team, and Jerry would be the outspoken one, and Allan would be standing there like Mr. Oh Wise, you know checking to see if what Jerry is saying is right. [both laughing]

AG: And it's funny they were men, but I also had two old ladies who during this really terrible time for me, it was kind of like you focus more on the terrible, than on the good at the time, there was great things going on, but I remember one of them was Molly Kicking Woman and the other was May Tallow, I was in my office I was the president, and it was one of Molly's girls, and said, "Molly wants you to come down here right now, like right now," and I said, "Ok." I went down to their house, and there was Molly and May sitting there, one on this side, one on this side, and there was a chair right there.

AG: The hot seat? [both laughing]

CM: And I come walking in and I was like, oh man, god I hate to have these woman, cause you gotta just tell them the truth, and they gave me tea, and straight to the core "So, your husband has a girlfriend uh?"

AG: Ohhhh gee.

CM: "Well, it ain't gonna last." And it's like, there's family sitting in the room. And like ...[laughing] And these are not soft spoken woman. But Molly gave me an example of what she went through; it just blew my mind. And she said "Yea one time with George, you know? [laughing] these are our highly respected Elders, and laughing, and she just laid it right out there.

AG: That ol' George.

CM: And she just told that woman, "You're gonna have to get out of here now!" [both laughing]

AG: Too good, it's like a Loretta Lynn song.

CM: No kidding , just like oh god, this ... but the way she did it and the other one she just sat there and she never said anything, just drinking her tea, and ok when's the next one gonna hit. And hers was, "Ok better get back to work."

AG: Strong message, for real.

CM: And I always remember, like cripe if that's Blackfoot counseling, boy do they cut to the chase; my god, I had to get up and had to get back to work.

AG: So, what did that do to you?

- CM: Focused me like you would not believe. It was like Carol, here's your path. And just stay on it, and all things will just come to be. Holy smokes. And I've often questioned that, and I never would've questioned that. That's how they counseled me.
- AG: Did it give you sense of, this isn't unique to me, because we make it so huge and the feelings are so big and we realize that this is what happens in lots of lives in lots of marriages.
- CM: I always knew then, it was like I had this team of people who liked what I was doing to begin with probably, but more importantly they wanted good things too. And they may not have been able to do a whole lot. But they were able to step in and say, you keep going and good things will come. And without saying and remember we'll be right there watching. Like today, many people wouldn't think to go find those people. Because jealousy and insecurity, have a lot more energy going on than that.
- AG: Where their energy is toward those things, and whereas shifting your energy toward the positive direction. And it keeps me thinking about that prayer, like Allan says you pray for the good, you look for the good. My uncle said that to me when I was so done with one of my separations with Scott; he said, "Look for the light in your day. Cause if we focus, we're going to manifest that energy."
- CM: It's a new way of doing business, and before we leave I'm going to take you over there I have something to give you. But when I come into the big building, the beaver-painted lodge, I'm on a high like you wouldn't believe. And that's the way I want to be. And people even though I may not be praying for them individually going down the hallway, I need to know that they have a choice, you can focus on this; you can focus, on this. And the college is going through a transition right now, and more importantly people wanted my opinion cause I been through so many times. I just wanna stay positive, we'll treat all these things as lessons. We'll build on the future. Even I noticed when I wanted to say more about what we were, just visiting about. I didn't know if it was the proper time to do it, I noticed that about myself because I started drawing away from, not only physically, and when I started talking about those old ladies, my question was why can't we just talk about it, why can't we? Well we can.
- AG: That's a big issue with vulnerability. We were taught not to be vulnerable, like that stoic Blackfoot person; it's not human, not real.
- CM: I started saying, like you go through these, I been married almost forty years to the same person.
- AG: That's amazing.
- CM: And yesterday, I was watching him try and get pity off of me: Oh my neck hurts; oh my neck hurts. You know, my usual reaction is, "You should go get your neck taken care of."

- AG: [both laughing] There's people paid to do that sort of stuff. [both laughing]
- CM: It's been going on for a few days, and I'm ok anyway, I just had this energy yesterday, cause we just had a ceremony and I'm just high, you couldn't stop me anyways. Oh what way to start the morning.. and I was getting coffee, he made coffee. That coffee, you gave is delicious. Ya, about three o'clock this morning I had to get up and get that fire going, because it got really cold in here and just couldn't get those logs burning. And I must not a been feeling good cause here was my reaction, response, "Yea well, when I picked up all that wood yesterday, it was kinda damp." [both laughing] In other words, you wouldn't a had any wood in this house if I didn't go get it, and he was like oh my neck hurts.
- AG: Instead of a compassionate response.
- CM: And I thought, your neck should hurt, you been laying on the bed no excuse you been sitting there watching tv, I don't get the luxury, don't have to do nothing, now you have people waiting on you. And he be like oh my neck hurts. And we talk about the crazy stories, and that's what we learned from George and Molly, we would go to their house, and they'd vent on us they would tell us things that they probably couldn't ... with friends and ceremony they probably couldn't do that, and so he'd venting, instead it's like, oh maybe I shouldn't have gone out there. And I made a comment and I couldn't believe, but I meant it, and I thought it and you know I'm pretty generous with my words, and I said, "You know Molly, she's a little tired of her boyfriend, because he's so young and immature, I said you know last time she come and dropped him off, she said I'm a gonna get an older one next time, because maybe if he's a little older he'll be a little bit more sensible and wiser and know what to do." Well my husband's a bit older than, me, god I hope he took it the right way!! [both laughing] and I just realized after I said it like, "Ouch."
- AG: He's gonna take it personally.
- CM: Yes he is, he's probably thinking, "She thinks she's so young, and her necks not hurting."
- AG: Someday.
- CM: But I knew it was like, "Ouch, ouch!"
- AG: That's not bad compared to some of the things I've said with my, there's a reason they're *exes* now.
- CM: But you have to say them, you know. I haven't always been that general, don't get me wrong, after 40 years you're like, "What difference does it make, if I say anything it wouldn't mean anything anyway. Ain't goin' nowhere."
- AG: For real. [both laughing]

- CM: Next time, I...was like, oh cripe, that was the wrong thing to say.
- AG: Were getting you divorced. [both laughing]
- CM: Crazy thing got serious! [both laughing] While I meant it.
- AG: We will burn the transcripts.
- CM: Aww shoot, it's funny because it's not funny, and it funny. It's ok... so how we got off on that but it's like, your clients they need someone to jerk 'em forward when they are not moving forward, so they are purposely going to go out and get this team, that's how important I think it is. Had Leonard not did that to me, had Jerry and Allan not came down, they were on council I think...I remember one time they came in, and they stopped by to see if they would come and listen to what Mike had to say...
- AG: Just kept you right up with them.
- CM: And I always remember we're going up to Mikes and wonder if you want a ride out there, and I couldn't, I had to say, "No, I just couldn't but I'll have to count on you guys to tell me later, and fortunately, they kept the good relationships with me, and they taught me, I'm sure it's back and forth, and they're wired. I can't imagine. And it's like, what do you think about this? I guess, in a real good way, Allan in 2000, the board didn't renew my contract, but he knew it way before and we built this building, [points it out] and we were in a ceremony there; him and Jerry from the ceremony; and I came out and I was walking by and they said, Carol, we want to ask you a question, and they said you been here a long time; and I said, "Ya," and he said, "This place is looking pretty good, you know, someone else is going to want to run it now."
- AG: Wow gees.
- CM: And this was in May. George and Molly opened their bundle on mother's day. He said, "So, what do you think," and I thought, "you just never know where these people were, thinking about your wellbeing in their thoughts, even though it's the wellbeing of the greater people, but still, and I always remember, course I was on my way to the bathroom; it was break time and I was visiting the people on the way out. It was year later, because I already knew that they weren't going to renew my contract. And they said, "Do you have anything to say, Carol?" "No, I don't have anything to say, but when you guys get done with your meeting, let me know so I can lock up the building. Had I not been prepared for that, I may have lost my confidence and self-esteem and... that was my response, I'll lock up the building. And as a matter of fact, it was in this room. That's exactly what it was. Ok, she's taken it this far, that's how far they thought I could take it. It was true, the chairman of the board him and his wife, they had risen to the top, but not quite to the top,.. they would be there because of other peoples energy and they couldn't quite get it. And I remember that night, I'll be over in my office, .. and I'm telling you all of this because I think the example could lead to success of

other people, over time. Having those kind of people just be there, keeping an eye...and I remember when it was all over and they came and said, "We're gonna go now," and I said, "Oh ok, good night." You know, and I locked up and John was waiting for me, my husband, cause he came at like 10. The board meeting, we try to be done before dark. I went out and he was sitting there and I told him, "They didn't renew my contract and also...that I'm ok with it." And I really don't know how I feel quite yet, because every decision I made was to make sure this place would never go away, because I believed in it so much, and I said I think it might be there now. I don't think it will ever go away now. To me, it has its breaking point; so we pulled out, and we live about 20 miles south of here, and there was this place, 7-10 miles, I told him I feel like I'm just breathing free right now, it was a relief, it was a relief. I — to have confidence that someone else can build it stronger, or — to at least maintain it, until it gets its bearings solid. Jealousy is a pretty strong power, and this place needs to be stronger than jealousy. And it is. I've come to witness that. The people that come here for services are going to be like the people who you will work with and you can use this as an example. That we build things and sometimes we kinda have to just watch, then step in, and build again. It's just like a human being. We tease about relationships, like you breaking up with our partner, Scott...the thing about it, it's always a team. And if the team's not willing to pull, you don't have to feel like you've lost or he's lost, it's just that that team was not ready to pull, and you may end up back there again, who knows, when the team is ready to pull. And that's how life is. Just like with my husband, when he got a little side tracked over here, in his mind in his belief system, he believed that he was doing something that caused him to grow. I don't think it was till later he realized it may have opened him up to new experiences, but it wasn't 'til later he realized that it wasn't what he liked....It was an experience, but not to be condemned because he had the experience. But to make him realize, that he this is, kinda what I liked, and I think even me, it was something that I, ... I remember one day, I told him I must really like you or want you to have a good life, because I would never want you to be ridiculed, put down in the community. And therefore I never opened, or tried to express anything. One day he told me, "You must really care about my soul." I said, "Yea well you know you've been a good friend to me, been a good friend to me, so you know we'll just go on from there, I never wanted you to be ridiculed. And ... those old ladies, well I could've knocked that man to his ankles right now, I knew when I got my...and I was like, what good will that do for him? So there's some pretty strong decisions that I had to make in life. One is that I became really good friends with his girlfriend.

AG: Wow!

CM: Because she was so, she just wanted better things, and she thought she would get them that way, and why I ever do this I don't know. But one day, I just picked up the phone and I called her and I told her, "I want you to know, we probably should have a visit someday." And "whenever you're ready, I am." And it was basically, of course she call me back, and so I become a good friend. I recognize that, probably the same thing that attracted me, attracted you, and there's nothing



wrong with that. But I want you to know I been through a lot of things, with this person. And if you're not solid about certain things, I had to help him grow to be what he is today, and if you can't do that, then you guys will just have been an affair. She went back to her husband, she was married at the time. I told her you might want to think about where you're at in life, and go from there. But myself, we'll always be friends. Nothing wrong with us liking the same thing.

AG: Wow. What an approach, that's such a neat approach,

CM: What I felt bad about is, I run into her downtown in her car and when I passed she put her head down, and I thought I don't want life to be like that.

AG: Wow, Carol that's amazing. Because through and through, you're the same person no matter what, nothing or nobody is going to rattle that. That's really special.

CM: But I didn't know that at the time, I just didn't want her to go around being shamed.

AG: That's interesting because the other women would want the opposite, they want them to feel pain, and shame.

CM: It's not like I went through it with no feeling,, I was like Mr. Murray you better think about what you're doing because you're going to shame yourself. I be like don't go around acting cute, cause it's attractive. [both laughing] But really, like now he'll tell people, I really wanted my wife to have a good life, but if you live that life, you wouldn't even know that, because is lived that life that he's talking about, but in hindsight he can say, "Ya, I wanted her to have a good life. But my nose is not straight; I have scars, so through this 40 years of process, ... had we not done this way, we would not be able to say these things, because I didn't get to this place by not knowing the other. I remember this one time, this girl was driving.... I kinda had, and this girl was driving our pick-up, and our pick-up cab was so full of people, and I was like, oh god, and it was kind of like our routine, and I pulled up to this pick-up and caused it to run into a snow bank and everybody ran, except two people, my husband and this other guy who was with him all the time, and of course they got out and men recover from events like that, and I grew up with a bunch of cousins and brothers, anyway, they said geez give us a ride down to the bar, and I was like, "Ok, my kids were in there, and my kids always come first, and maybe that's the key throughout my whole lifetime of events for me, and we were in the car, and we went to the bar, and I just got out, and I walked in, and this girl that was driving my truck, and I went in there and I could see one of them was my brother's sister, I knew something had been kinda going on and this is the first time, I had actually seen it. And I said to her, "Are you with my husband?" And she never said anything, she just started backing up, physically backing up, and I said to her I just want to know the truth. And she never said anything and I just turned around and started walking out, and you could feel the tension; it was a bar it was an ugly rowdy bar, you could just feel

the tension, everybody was waiting for the next step. Anyway, this is so strange, she's into *Native Wellness* now, this lady, and I never said anything evermore just went on in life. Two years ago, she sent me a post, or no, she came here for a seminar, I went over there and I always try to keep myself excited about life, and I went over there and she was presenting. It was all over and there were greetings and hellos, and I walked up, and a lot of people hugged me, and maybe it's something I do, I don't know, but I hug people and anyways, I took a step forward and she said, "Shake hands or hug?" And I said, "It's your call." And she didn't know what to say, and she wasn't saying anything and I was like, "Well how about both?" And I shook her hand and hugged her. A few weeks later, I got a post card here, addressed here, and I thought she never wanted my husband to know, that's why she sent it here, and she did this apology, she said, "I was just sending you this post card; I would like to be friends with you. I was just a foolish kid, didn't know what I was playing with, can you forgive me?"

AG: Wow...

CM: The day I got it, I was like, "Oh, my god... and I thought I don't know whether to tear it up and be ashamed or you know, or ok, or I don't even know what to be. So, I tucked it away. And this lady I work with, she was my secretary when I was president, and I encourage her to go back to school and get herself better. And she knew about this, she was one of those,... you and I are going to be good friends, I can tell otherwise I wouldn't tell you about this...!

AG: [laughing]

CM: And.. but that's how her and I are friends like this, and that one day I said, "Hey Lola, what do you think about Lita?" And she said, "She's doing all these trainings now in Native Wellness." I said, "I know I really want her to have a good career, cause she deserves a good life," and she said, "I knew you felt like that," and I said, "Well what do you think about this?" I said, "I need your opinion. Should I show it to John or should I not," and I gave her the card; she read, and she's trying to make friends, and I don't think John could handle that. And I said, "Oh, ok." But the back of my... and I thought, *Isn't it strange how peoples' lives are*. And I could see what Lola knew more about what John can handle and what I can't. We went to this: I actually gave it its name, it's called "Intercepting Interests," Native Research in intertribal interests, they give it a name at each conference, so both John and I went and one of the presenters was her, and low and behold we ended up in the same table of six; all tables were divided into groups of six, and I thought you know God I know you're up to something, because there's always a reason. So we sat down, of course. "Hello, how are you?" John couldn't sit down and he had to stand up. It was a part of the where the tables were close, and I thought, "Oh well, he has to do it on his own terms; ain't no way I can fix it for him." And anyways we got into our little thing and she's into physical exercise and keeping her body in shape and she got up to leave the group. I thought this was always odd, his physique, he's built to just stay in shape. He calls it, "I'm a poor cook, that's why he's a skinny man." It's

because he's in shape. Anyway, she got up and she was making a stretch her arms touch her toes. I seen him walk outside standing there smoking a cigarette, and on the way home, "For being a physical fitness trainer, you'd think she'd be in better shape," and I said, "Gotta give her credit, what would she look like if she didn't do it?" And that's when I learned there is no reason to be jealous of other woman, because men are just like that. They are just like that. And John is can be very attractive, and unattractive, and plain down mean looking, and mean acting, really self-serving ego. And on the other hand, what got him in trouble to begin with is, I always went to study native women in Women Studies, and he went to college after me, and they offered a class, and his mother was an abused woman, and so he took the class and the class studied Native American woman, and, at the time, there's no way I could've have taught it; I really had my plate full. And one day, he come in and said, "They should have Native women American class here, and I said, "Ya," and he said, "Well who can teach it?" And, I said, "Well, maybe you should go ask Dorothy. She's always an active woman." And she couldn't do it, and he was kind of complaining, and he said you should teach this class, and I thought I just can't do it, I really can't do it. Finally, after a couple more complaints, "You know you should do it," and he was like, "Well." I don't do that to him too often, cause he's got such an ego. [laughs] And he said, after well he taught it, but that's when the soft side of him came out. ... and this lady was in an abusive relationship, that was the attraction. She recognized that he didn't like his mom and what she went through, and that is what she was attracted to, and sadly enough she went back to the abusive. And last week she came in to ask me who was living in the house across the creek from us, cause her husband spent the weekend there. After all these years. Same place, same situation. And I thought to myself, "My god." Here's what I thought one time, because she's always tracking her husband down, and I thought if I would *of* went on my way, she would have ended up maybe she would have had a relationship, and maybe she wouldn't be chasing her husband, and I thought, "No, I know John, and he would have ate her alive." It was that situation. Because I always remember, after I visited with her, I went to talk to her, she talked about how he talked about how he didn't think it was right that women were abused. And I thought that got to be attractive to women that are abused.

AG: Mhmm, saviour.

CM: Yep, so I guess looking, you I know we're talking about the topic, but I think that it's all a part of it. I think that's why today I can pray for all people. I often wonder what I'm going to learn over the next 20 or 30 years. You know. That will be helpful to somebody, but it's very sensitive material.

AG: I think you're going to teach the world a lot of lessons. Our virtue that we seem to struggle the most is, the humility in the most possible way. Humbleness is about my understanding is transcending over the ego, looking at the self, looking at the big picture. Seeing it's not about us personally, especially in the Indian world, and that is something I keep thinking over, listening to your discussions and I listened

to the last interview just thinking wow, creator gives our communities people like you so we can rise above, help ourselves.

CM: It's not easy, because it causes you to soul search even deeper in yourself. I can remember even John knew I was having these visits with this lady. And I would have to ask, but I would always tell her I just want you to know you helped me as much as you are helping yourself, having these discussions and I remember, do you really think you loved him do you think it was love? And she said no, and I said yea and I said I respect that. I said whether or not you'll still think this 10 years from now or 20, we don't know that. But it is strange having someone tell you that they loved your husband, that's a real strange feeling. It's like you feel it right in here, cause I remember when she said that I thought, I wonder if she means it, or if she's being facetious, and we just kept visiting, and she thinks she loved him, and then one day about 5 years later, we had become good friends and then I said well what do you think about what happened? I'm not sure. And I said ive always wondered and I said do you think that what you learned you can take back to your own relationship? And move somewhere from there? And she said ya, but I thought this was interesting, and she said yea but my husband just don't want to learn anything about being an Indian.

AG: that's what it was.. it was her draw to something she wanted she saw with the two of you, thinking I could have that, I want that, I could have everything about that and that's not , and that's what I and could have if I have a part of them. Which is him, but that's not how it works,

CM: It struck me strange, sometimes now, she'll come and she'll tell me her problems and she'll say, yea well I was getting muff ready and rick says where are you going today? And she says, I just thank god for all ,, he don't know where I'm going. And I was like, I don't know, why can't she find a husband like that, like what is it why she can't find a husband. And Lola knows her whole life story, about two years ago, I told her I'm so tired of her, thinking she is going to have things, thinking she is going to revert, and then she goes back to the same thing. I said I just don't get it, I said so I'm not going to listen to her. Having a day that day, and I said ya, but I'm going to tell her that. I'm not telling you to just vent, I'm gonna do something, but I trust lola to see if what I was saying was making any sense. And I told her you better go off and try something innovative, and whatever you do is going to be perfectly fine with me, she ignored me for six months. And one day I was going to work, I seen her I says hey stranger what you doing over there, and she said, she gets this busy look, I just know her behavior, it's nice to see you hope your doing good. But last Wednesday she came in and this is what bothered me, after 4 hours of visiting, at the end, she said you know what I came in here for, I came in here to ask if you could pray for me, and I said for what. And that's when she said who lives across the road from you. And I was like you got to be kidding me, it took you four hours to ask, I was so frustrated, and I was like what are you not dealing with, what are you not dealing with. Cause if you're going to go anywhere, and I think she tried the same path as her

husband, and I think she found that it's just not ok, so she forgives him for everything and anything he did.

AG: it's that thing we talked about, if your going to make avow, you have to do your part. If your coming to this pint and asking for spiritual intervention, what are you going to do, you can't just continue, from what we gathered, its, you're a part of if, you part is to move through things. That's a hard lesson I'm facing myself, in terms of sitting with things, and you've been there where you sit with grief these traumatic experiences that cannot happen, that your gonna make go away . there is no pill you can inject...there is no running from that kind of existenc.ee just have to give up sit there and let it move through your system. A lot of people will run, they live their lives through addictions, everything that make s a distraction. Or quick elevation, or quick band aid, it's still there. I remember this story, I used to work as a youth, and I would tell how the Buffalo the only animal with lots of tuft winter fur, and no other animal really grows that for the winters, and they say well why and I'd say because the buffalo is the only animal that when it sees the storm coming, it goes through it.

CM: omg you said that.

AG: Yes, it goes through it, all the horses everybody runs, the buffalo pushes through it knows, I get through this there's good whether over there. I heard it from this First Rider girl who was doing a play, I had gotten my *iinisskm* transferred to me, and they say your *inisskim* will help you through. And that sixth sense that tells you trust continue, *iikaakiimaat*. And if that is all I can have right now, . when I just don't want to deal, like those down on the floor sobbing moments? Where you just have to sit through, and those are hard, because how I feel and why I chose this study, especially after losing family and your left there alone, you have to realize if you had that kind of vision that in the spirit world. It's our faith, connection, wilinnglness to believe, to let ourspirit pull us along to be alive. Or else we are empty vessels, were nothing but ego walking around because we are trying to be human machines not spiritual beings, and that's what I think about, in my learning for myself, it was the only thing that I found that gave me relief.

CM: your good at what you do, very easy to talk to. And that's a gift.

AG: Thank you.

CM: most people would have done a standard interview and walked out.

AG: I'll keep you 24 hours a day if I could! [both laughing] Your special person. And I recognize that. I'm a behaviorist I watch, I listen I observe, I guess I'll make a living out of it, it fascinates me the human spirit can triumph.

CM: Creator gave me these, to do what I do, it took me a while to figure out, I would think that I was venturing on some kind of oddity. Is this a game? Where I can be like them? Not like them, but do what I do... I don't like the word game, it's something your messing with. It strikes me strange, I share all this with you,

because I know you can take and put it into something, because most other people will have time to sit and interview me like you did. When you first introduced this to me and it was about prayer. And I think it was prayer that made me do this. I was very young I would go to church, I was the only one in my family, and my dad would drive me to church, and he would sit outside and wait for me. They didn't have money to bring me, the priest was mean to my mom, mean to her. I think I would have different spiritual experiences. But my life as a marriage started out just like everybody else. And that part is very draining energy part of my life, but it was I realized I didn't want to deal like that. And my husband uses his turnbull headed, and when he says it, it sounds so negative, but it's the equal, what I call the ... and had I not been able to think through a different level of thinking, I would react to turnbullheaded. And he does that now and then when he can't control my life. And he says boy that Bull is strong, if I was not thinking the way I think I would come back and said something, instead my determination. . and so I think that when we are talking about the healing that is going on, the people accepting the boost, some of this prayer that you are going to write about, is where they are gonna have to go...to find their direction of determination for themselves. They have to do that in order to get out of that cycle , that state of cycle could come about easy, and for a lot of the people. That's why I have no negative about them receiving compensation, if it points them out of that cycle that's good enough. And prayer, , can come beyond that. And it's going to be people like you who are going to guide that, and it's going to be people like me praying for you to make it happen. Cause I want to be one of those people, like one day I made a comment, I never said who you were, you know I did an interview with this one lady, and I said she really needs to be successful, and cause she can make a difference, and that's what you need to do for the people you work with. I'll be the one stepping up there someday, and you'll be successful, and I'll be like how are you doing? And you'll say " not here Carol!" Don't do that to me here. Because you are already there, you are not on council for no reason, you are delving in prayer and leadership simultaneously, that's why you interviewed me, I was delving in leadership and prayer, one step is the other step. But you have a personal life, that's why I shared this with you. You'll have a personal life, that everybody is going to think they know. There ain't no way they are going to know with your significant other. That's just up to you, no matter what. Happy confused, you are going to handle that, you are going to sit down and make a smudge, and you will pray. And you will be guided. I didn't feel like a saint when I was told I was leaving, I felt really awkward when I got this card in the mail. I thought holy smokes, it been 30 years ago. But it's still on her mind. And for me I was like, you know I'd pass, because I had been growing, but she trusted that I had been growing in order to do that.

AG: And she respected you a lot , wanting a piece of your life. Or to be in your life I should say.

CM: And it was like, why can't it be both, if I shake her hand it's a business deal, if I hug her it's way more than that.

- AG: You are like way up there!! [laughing] Wow that is just amazing, Carol.
- CM: You see you have that same gift, I can tell that, I can see that in Waterton, and even when you think you made a mistake, it'll correct itself, and you will be successful. It's good you tapped into people like Allan, myself, other people. Because our role is to be supportive, and when you finish your schooling, we'll be very proud of you, whether we're right in the fore front, or just aware, because if I didn't have people doing that for me I couldn't be doing what I am today. And sometimes you just wanna quit, and cover up with your favourite blanket and just sleep. But it will come. Because you gotta get back up and start again. I think for some reason your study came at this time in your life.
- AG: I know it just boggles me.
- CM: And what I told you about your mom; you're ready to take your own steps, otherwise she wouldn't have left. Cause now she can help you in spirit. That will be important for you right now, your kids are getting big, your little one. Don't matter my kids are 15 years apart, they keep you in tune with the world as you participate in all this other stuff. I was listening to the last interview, and I would be like laughing and then crying. [both laughing] Like oh my god, thank goodness I had my earphones on at the computer, I must look crazy. Oh it's good stuff, it's so amazing cause my supervisor keeps, she's really interested in this too. She's worked with the Blackfoot people, mostly Narcisse, and she keeps wanting me to pull more, like why are you studying this, what is your personal part in this, and I'm like this isn't about me. I started off, no I'm going to do this really nice academic Native perspective piece and I'm like look at this, [laughing] this is my thesis notes, and I'm like it started at one end and now it's like way over here, she said, "Allow yourself conversations," and it's taking me this long. I'm thinking yea it's taking me forever to do this Masters, everything from my baby to my mom to separation, everything in between has happened but this is a real constant and I thought oh my god what am I going to do when I'm done my thesis? I'm enjoying the openings that are happening within myself, the knowledge, that spirit that knowledge spirit that's coming in giving me these life forms to see, to contemplate, and to apply. These questions are not even what I wanna ask, but you can't change the questions, but the discussions are the real good stuff, because I can ask a question that's not on here because it's helping me expand more, and the work is just gonna be gathering everything up, and just letting it come to its own. Letting it reveal itself the spirit of this prayer study. It's amazing, I wish every one of our people can feel and know these things, and that's why I'm doing it.
- CM: It would be like lighting fires, cause someone else is going to be, oh this interests me. I started the Blackfoot studies department here... and ... if somebody would have told me then, cause I wanted to know, I never got to take any of those classes. But just how you just wished for other people, that's what I did, but now those classes are required. A minimum of six credits...when I first started it was 16 credits, that's how it all started. [both laughing] I think your study will be,, a

fire. It's a purposeful fire, a meaningful fire, and you finish your riding. And you go to your clientele. People will come to you, and just a regular daily basis of life, you'll have something to give, because everything we tell you is not necessarily to do it the way we said. But when it all gels, It's like cells coming together, .. and have faith in yourself to do something different, because leadership is not doing what everybody likes at the time, it's doing what needs to be done, and when the fires catch, then everybody is there. That's what it's about. I think that I was guided to you. And that's why I said leadership and prayer go hand in hand. I seen Serene up in Waterton, and she's experienced too at the same time, I wanted to visit with her but had I visited with her I would have been really rude to the person that was waiting to have a conversation, because she is in leadership, I thought well she has Audrey and Leonard, but when it's your own mother how honest can she be ... the word dishonest, we limit our conversation.

AG: We're protective.

CM: And when you told me your mom was about my age I thought, these are things her mom would want to know if her mom couldn't converse to her. I think it's like my daughter last night, she had a dream, mom come and sit by me I want to talk to you, I just get a kick out of her, and she told me about, a couple a dreams, and she answered herself. And I don't think she knew, and I thought she posed a question and then she answered herself. I hear her experiences of the weekend by her dreams, and I thought, I feel so good for her, but she doesn't even know it's wisdom. When we are looking at what this interview is about, it's woman *Piikaniaki*, talking to *piikaniiaakii*, all variables erased, it's just spirit. And in your career, you're going to have that gift. One of the things you'll have to do is, don't ever forget to rebuild your own spirit, while you're giving it. That will be an important part of what you do, what you do well. It's not selfish, you'll have to continually grow throughout this lifetime. Take time for yourself. People used to say what do you do when you travel, I say I sleep. I get a manicure, I get a pedicure.

AG: Good, good.

CM: That was my thing, and you'll find yours. And don't feel selfish, enjoy the moment. Cause if you hit hard, you stop it. And you guys have it. I got that but not as much because there's a structure within tribal leadership, people come up to you from the hungry table to the fighting table, there is no buffer at all, and that's why I tell you that, it's all the growth of us Blackfoot people. What you're doing, you're doing this, but even so you have to take care of yourself, you have to take care of your own spirit, and if that means having someone massage your fingers. It makes your spirit feel good, it's absolutely right. Keep doing it. I used to have to go riding in the mountains up here. It was all to build my own self, because you always prepare for the people.

AG: Wow, you're going to have to take me riding.



- CM: Just in my car, I go up to the mountains. . . . go to Waterton it's the best thing you can do for yourself.
- AG: I've been finding the little spots.
- CM: I never did this and I wished I would have is just take that with you and turn it on and talk to yourself. You need to do that, because sometimes in leadership you're the only one out there. You have to talk to yourself. And it will help you. I intend to live a long time, but I also want to know at what points I need to talk to myself to take care of myself and it's really strange this morning when you text me and I can almost feel what you're feeling. I was by myself in the office. I thought geez if I can just get this, and there's the barricade. I just laughed and I thought god I've been there, I've done that. Be able to laugh at yourself like you just did. Just all over the place.
- AG: God this Carol, is gonna think I'm an airhead. I was thinking oh my god, how can I do this to Carol. Noooo. [laughing]
- CM: But the good part is it allowed me to stop and get ready. And I thought you know god, you really take care of me. I was getting phone calls, can I talk to you, I was like no I have somebody coming...but it caused me to break that shift, I felt good. I know. She's probably got her foot as far down as it can go.
- AG: Vehicle just wobbly.
- CM: Hoping to god she don't get stopped. I been there. And I'm hoping that you'll go farther in life than I did. I always wish that when you're as old as me you can just have this big thing going on that's really helping people, what we are talking about today will lead in process. And all these people you want to be held by what you're doing. And that's what you want to be able to reflect on. After you leave here today, thought ok what can I put in there now. No sense in waiting. That's why I been able to overcome some of these things that could have stopped me in my tracks. Cause believe me, I was humiliated, I was shamed, I was hurt. Throughout life, it has not been gentle. I refuse to dwell on it now, I'm aware of it, it know it but I don't want to dwell on it, cause there is no action on this. As you overcome your mom, her physical presence not being around, it's not... there's no gift in that.
- AG: Yep you'll spend a lot of years dwelling. My first marriage was very full of the things you had gone though, addictions, disappointments, and dwelling on it so much, when I thought I was putting it behind me by going our separate ways, and I brought it right with me to the next. And I just kicked myself everyday, Scott kept trying to tell me, you're bringing your stuff and he kept trying to tell me that, something in me wouldn't let it go, as much as I thought I was strength and everything smart. Still being a little spoiled girl, and I think what it's pushed me toward, it's like everything is just dumped, there's no more, this is where I'm at, I have to learn these things, or I continue down a self-destructive path. Cause there

is something telling me, there's other things to do. And that's what Amethyst always tells me, we have a big job to do, we have lots of healing, education to do, and I'm sitting there, no I want to feel sorry for myself.

CM: It's familiar.

AG: [both laughing] It's what I know it's what I do.

CM: Do you like being married. Do you like a relationship.

AG: Yes.

CM: And that will be the key to deciding what you are going to do. I never heard you say that about Scott telling you, it ain't me. To develop a deeper relationship, your gonna have to be descriptive to him, and it's not for him, it's not even about him, it's about you. Because then it don't matter whether he likes you or not, because you've come to your term, and maybe it's not Scott, maybe it doesn't have to be a male, but you're gonna get there, by the time you're really feeling important, you gonna know you ain't nothing but just another person in this world. And when it hits me, oh I just laugh at myself and I think geez I gotta be more important than that.

AG: I've had a little taste of that, my moving to Missoula was a big part of me trying to help myself and get over myself cause I was like teaching at the universe of Lethbridge, and I was on these boards, and I moved to Missoula and I was like and my friend Paula she was like, I guess you're realizing you're having some kind of a wakeup call that "you ain't shit here!" and then coming back to the rez, I was like do you guys know what my CV looks like?! Do you know what my GPA was?! [both laughing] Like we don't care, your one of 12, you were all voted into it equally. And that was a real interesting concept, because we have people like with no education to people and formal education, and I was like I'm one of you. But I had a lot of respect, because the knowledge they have is incredible. The discussion is always about pulling out our best perspective out for that issue. It's incredible. They all bring their skills and Blackfoot. Scott made me fall in love with Montana, I did, but not to that level. He would tell me I'm small town, I'm not fancy, you in your world and he'd always be questioning that. I didn't know what he was telling me, I thought he was trying to put me down. Like I wasn't Indian enough, something like that, and he's supper Indian. That whole stupid thing that you go through when you're trying to figure it out. He wanted me to humble myself and appreciate those things that are human. He held a lot of mirrors up to things I didn't see before. When you think so highly of yourself. And you're always being told.

CM: That's how we build our people. Those years are tough. I used to run this women's support group here. Did I tell you how I got into it. This lady I think went through it, she wanted to have a domestic violence support group. I didn't have formal training, I was the president, and you hold certain strings, and I don't

know who sent her. And she said I wanna have a support group for domestic violence, and I had no experience, other than getting beat up a couple of times, that was my experience. And I said well I can get you a room and make sure we have coffee. And I said and I'll buy some little snacks or something. And I can put it in the newspaper. And had absolutely no idea what I was involved in, so we put it in the newspaper, we started six, and I said I really don't know what do but when I start, I smudge, and just believe that that smudge will take care of whatever goes on there, and I said I can do that, trying to be all helpful. I advertised, doors will open, snacks, and by six clock 58 people walk in the door. And of course, we aren't expecting that many people. So anyway, it's getting close to six it's time to start, ... and I grew up knowing of her she's older than me, and she came to me before, and she said you know I been on this dream, I had a rough life. And she must 'a been trying to get to know me. And just grew up admiring her, because I thought she was older and seemed to have it together. The last I seen her. And I was like yea ok, it's six o'clock, I make a smudge tell everybody to pray. And I said I'd like to introduce our coordinator Suzanne and she'll run the meeting. And I sat down, and I looked over at her and she sat there and she was just froze to her chair, she was not even moving physically. And I was like oh my god! I just knew right then, and I thought this can't be happening, my sister knows, we're all, I'm sitting in there...none of my immediate relatives and my husband's, and I thought god this is domestic violence. How do you address this, and finally I just got up, and I walked over, Susanne you'll have to take over now cause I don't know how to do this. And she put both of her arms up and pulled me, and she said I can't do it, Carol. And I thought oh my god. She goes you'll have to do the work tonight. This was the lady that brought cookies. Farthest from the farthest of my entire reality was about to unfold. Finally I just started. We went every Monday until spring, from November. And the reason I stopped was because there was absolutely no way, I was getting people that was hard core. But the introduction just blew my mind. We cut them off at nine o'clock. There was not a quiet moment, for three hours. It narrowed down, cause you can't have a session with that many people. And Suzanne never showed up again. But talk about commitment, and I was way out of my league, but I was there every Monday from 6 to 9. And the women that were there, just like the things people were going through, like in Canada, not the boarding school experience, just the everyday human experience, people were putting it out, but the last one this person couldn't separate from me being the person who violated her to the person that the anger was coming out of her. And I say me because we were all sitting at a table and when she would start expressing herself, she was so mad, and she would say and when you raped me and when you beat me, and when you did all this, and that's when I knew I was holy smokes. What happened is the treatment center sent people down to this support group, people liked what was going on there, it was never me, it was the smudge, but that's the one that scared me, to me this was a one-on-one, but she was afraid to be alone with people, and she used this tactic in order to express. I said we're like a river, we're all the water flowing, and the rocks, and sometimes the water will turn us over, and smooth the rocks, but remember we are all still moving. I would always use that, is we are all

still moving. And they would talk about how the violent, the women here are real violent. And it was the mirror I used as an example, next time you go down the street and someone looks mean at you, I said look in the mirror. If that one's looking mean at you, you'll know why. And this one lady she comes back, oh my god Carol that works! Instead of waiting for those women who are looking mean, and I just wave and smile, and now people are waving and smiling at me. We learned a lot from the mirror. And if I was going to keep doing this, every place I work, there will be a mirror. Just to remind us. We need to take a break, if we are going to keep doing this, I gotta get some people to help in here. She started scaring other people. .. part way through they were hearing such great things that come from the mean one that come from the treatment here. And some were like no, we don't want them here. And so when one of them said, hey Carol remember you talked about the men come here and I said, "Yea, well we should try it." And I said, "Yea, I'll get more cookies." The women who had gotten some healing just immediately went back to anger. Just full force. And it was like it was That man that was doing it to them and it was like good grief, what are we going to do here? I just bring it right up, domestic violence is because people are hurting each other. So what difference if we doing it in here. They voted not to let them back. Thank god. And then the men wanted to come, and then they wanted to have another group for men. And I didn't think it was gonna work, cause I'm not a man. Later on, I was kinda sorry, I thought I could have did it. I would ask the hard questions, but I think it would of.

AG: You can still do it.

CM: But I was always kind of sorry. Once we start, you don't want to start, we were going till like midnight. Except the treatment people, had to leave at 9. It was rule up there. I always think about that, I remember that first night I thought what is domestic violence in its broadest sense, in its narrowest sense. Had a talk about what it felt like to get beat up, and what it felt like after you got beat up. And the sexual relationships, and I just put it out there, and I think that's what people thought they had to be right away.

AG: Yes, you have to open the can of worms.

CM: My sister-in-laws, said they were really sorry for what I had to go through. And I said, "It's ok, it ain't happening now."

AG: Yea I was thinking about that, 'cause they were there.

CM: Oh, that was healing, and we're always good friends, but you never know when you're dealing with the hard stuff, if you're gonna remain friends. So they knew then if they could talk to me about anything.

AG: Oh that's really good.

CM: And even now they'll filter a lot of stuff through me, that they want their older brother to know.

- AG: Oh yea that old trick...[both laughing] Oh man you're such an awesome sister-in-law, I haven't had that experience to have the same but looking back it wasn't all their fault. I wasn't exactly who I wanted to be in that relationship. I didn't do my part. I think you can overcome anything.
- CM: I think so, I really think so, but I think it's all about becoming a good friend, I'm sure I had my shortcomings but unless if he says it in a way that really hurts me, I just don't like it, but if he does it in a kind way, than I'm ok, than hes being a friend.
- AG: Do you think this is an important concept to counselling?
- CM: I think so, I think friendship is, just like you and I will always be friends, 'cause of what we shared, in counseling we are not giving of ourselves. To be just giving. I believe we're actually helping the world to become a better place. Whether it starts in our community and expands out. . . but that's what we're doing. and I really believe, one time I was talking about change but I was talking about tribal councils change, and I said it's like hitting the drum. When you hit the drum, the sound is going, and that's what we're doing, were doing the same thing. We don't have to stay in the academic rhetoric to say what we have to say. Eventually we are going to have to put this in academic, we know that. But in order for us to make headway, we have to talk in the way we talk.
- AG: mmmm
- CM: And that will be your job. And that's difficult. And that in itself is a challenge,
- AG: It is.
- CM: But it will be, it's something you'll be able to do, what needs to be in there, will be in there, you'll never feel like you put enough in there.
- AG: That's what I'm worried about.
- CM: That's what will make you someone who needs to sit with groups of people and talk about this stuff, not only small groups of people looking for help, but people that work in the social sciences, that'll be your role. And that's where I think it will fit. What you're working on. I learned this from a man named Cecil Tallow, that just our visiting is probably more sharing than we've ever done in a question and answer dialogue. Because now in your paper you're going to have to be descriptive, about a scenario. And you can do that now. Because it's removed from, for me having to do it would jump into it, but you've heard it, I think you felt it, now you can describe it. And it's important for me, because we are your link in that sense that we earlier described as, we know in our creation women figured it out with the help of men. But in other societies and cultures I don't know if it's the same. And from what I understand it's not. And it's sad that they have to have that way of life. I don't know, I hope I'm never born a white woman. For that reason.

AG: [both laughing] Quote Carol Murray!!

CM: If my husband heard me say, that I think he'd kill me.

AG: I think you'd stir up all the white women, and start a revolution. [both laughing]

CM: Beyond women's rights.

AG: Way beyond women's rights. You'll hit 'em where it hurts. Spiritually, religiously!! [both laughing] I'm deconstructing this religion that were in!

CM: Am starting again, and you guys out there listen to us.

AG: Why don't we take a break, for a bite.

AG: Back to recording our second half of our interview on October 17, 2011, I have two aspects that I want to talk to you about one of them is a dream that Scott had about my mother. Last summer he had a dream, the summer that my mother had passed, she passed late November, in his dream we were here in Browning. at the time he had this dream, I had left Missoula and I was homeless. living in the basement of Leroy and Amethyst's house with my family, while we were renovating the house in Brocket. he was there helping me and this dream he said we were in Browning and we were at the war bonnet and we were coming out and I had seen some of my friends and I went with them and he was chasing after me and he heard my mom say, "Scott come here," and he looked and seen her and she said, "Come here" Scott saying, "But I gotta go and chase Angie." she said, "No leave her, I want to talk to you." and they walked around the building and to me it sounded as if it was on the east side of the building and they sat down and she was wearing a buckskin dress that had yellow and red bead work or quill work and he was sitting there and she was telling him that (basically, after all that is said and done) you need to tell Angie that she has everything that she needs to get through this difficult grieving. She knows what to do and he said, "Well what do you mean" and they talked a little bit and she said, "You tell her to live everyday as if it were a ceremony." And she said, "Tell her that and she knows what to do." And he said, "Okay," That was it. So I had thought about that life is a ceremony and I thought that is a strong thing. That morning that he actually had that dream when we had woke up the lamp was on in that room and we hadn't touched that lamp at all since we had been staying there for weeks, it was on and I remember telling him "Gee why did you turn that lamp on? You know I can't sleep with any light in the room." He said, "I didn't turn it on." So ,both of us were spooked. And then he tells me about his dream. To me I had a strong sense that she had come and given me something, that he was able to speak to her and get this from her. And I sat with this dream for long a time and I thought to myself, I may have some understanding from what I have gathered over the years but I really don't know what that means, I really don't know what it looks like to live your life as if it were a ceremony, and I think I have a better idea now than I did at that time but at the time I didn't and I tossed it aside and I wasn't ready. I was still selfish in my

grieving and those places where your grieving takes you and I wasn't ready to be in deep thought, where I find I am now.

I had mention this to my supervisor Cynthia and she's all about taking my narratives and philosophy and using them. Have you read that Shawn Wilson's *Research is Ceremony*

CM: No, I have read it, no.

AG: Okay, I use that whole concept for my methodology. It's about personalizing the research because that's what we do as native people. We research things that are meaningful and that makes sense to us. rather than using foreign concepts that sometimes you think where did they get that amount of research. We are relevant to what we're studying. She keeps talking to me about that and I read that book and I used it and it made a whole lot of sense to where I'm at today with these questions and research and she said, "Ask that question to who you're interviewing that's important." That's what I'm doing today, I'm going to ask you that question: What does life living as a ceremony mean to you?

CM: What I would say is, when you would get up in the morning and when you're coming out of your dream or sleep state, if you feel it as if it's special and it creates a special way of being for the whole day but if you look at it as just being another day then it's not a ceremony. Even that waking and saying I'm getting up to live today, it's really guided and keeping that in mind, otherwise you're just going through routine existence and it's not special. I think of living in a special way is the ceremony. Everything you do has purpose and meaning and direction and sometime people may even sum it up and say you live life so seriously but it's not so much about the seriousness as being purposeful and meaningful and what you want to do and makes you feel good and what makes other people feel good because to me that what ceremony is all about.... in our strict... Our duties, make a smudge and we pray for our families and relatives then our bigger tribes as a group and those people who ask us to pray for them and then we do the same thing in the evening but that's rule of the different societies responsibilities to it.

But I think of life as a ceremony is creator gave us this existence as a human being and making it a really good experience. A good experience. just like being here today and visiting with you or doing things that are important. not only as a person but to both of us as a group. To me that would be a good experience a meaningful experience.

AG: mmm Yeah.

CM: It will feel good, the depth of it is the things I had do before you came I made sure they were done, so that when we sat down and believing in the seriousness of your question, I wanted to be able to sit down and visit about your questions and try as we might but we will may never be able to create this day again and to me that's is a ceremony.

Because I shared with you meaningful things, you shared with me, we created a new meaning together. And to me that is the ceremony of today.

AG: Again I keep hearing about that thing, you know, you and Allan had said and even Andrew Blackwater that I have also interviewed, that continual pray for the good and pray for the positive

CM: mmmm

AG: Take away the negative.

CM: mmmmm, because we haven't seen the negative, actually I should say I haven't seen the negative, giving anything good here.

AG: No it doesn't.

CM: And I think that why just that emphasis on the good it's always so strong.

AG: mmmm

CM: Because that's how everybody wants to have things good.

AG: Yeah.

CM: In life.

AG: I realized that, I caught myself in the last few years my whole start up to my teaching and my research was based on identifying colonization and colonial behaviours and I realized, ugh, I'm not offering anything good here but, you know, people would continue to say, you know, oh I didn't realize this and, you know, I didn't know that boarding schools had such an affect or, now I know why so and so does this and that was all good and that was the first step right.

CM: No worries.

AG: Yeah, no worries, but after that it was just like, "Geez I'm not doing what I really feel like I need to be doing and I don't feel like I'm really giving something anymore besides awareness."

CM: It's really, I think it's really, easy to, when you start to become aware of something, just being so engulfed in it, and um, we were, um, involved in this, um, you probably read this book?

13:01...*of the oppressed.*

AG: I haven't read it, but I've heard of it a lot.

CM: You heard of it. um, when we were in graduates school one of our professors used it as one of our books and, um, so when my husband started teaching here he used



it in one of his classes, and um, the coming to awareness was so overwhelming for so many people by the examples that he would read that book line for line and, um, because there must be so much embedded in the, um, in the fibres of the sentences but it was that that it caught the attention and it was like almost, almost like grieving. everybody had to go through the grieving process to remove themselves from, you know, that are from, that are to step far enough away to say “oh my gosh” this really did happen to us.

AG: Yeah.

CM: And I think that why people get caught in that, um, because even me I can, I can go to public meetings or I can just sit and observe that public behaviour but particular public meetings. And people who are not conscious of that colonization will immediately perform those colonizing acts and, um, when you're conscious of it you almost get caught up in their colonizing act.

AG: mmmm

CM: Rather than, helping the person move out of it. And, um, that was one of the, um, things that may travel?

14:56 taught me. um, she didn't call it colonization or anything, you know, the terminology that we use, but she would always say “Carol, come see something, just pray for them,” all her favourite words, just pray for them.

AG: [laughing]

CM: You know, and, but now if I see someone in a public meeting, I try to make myself conscious that as they go into the colonizing act, that instead of getting angry at them for being a colonizer, I'll start praying for them. That they can move out of that but without being aware we would never be able to know that.

AG: Yeah

CM: And I think that's why we got caught into that, it almost, it's true if you stay in it too long it feels so negative, you are just disgusted with yourself.

AG: mmmm

CM: For thinking the thoughts.

AG: mmmm, ...

15:58 ...and almost giving life to that identity.

CM: right!!

AG: over and over

- CM: right, and it's not funny and people are trying so hard to become better community people, that when we started talking about, um,
- 16:23 ... of the oppressed, colonization, people were using the word oppression, um, what was the other word they were using, oppression, um, they were saying the word wrong, but they had the essence of what it meant, they knew what the concept was but they were using the wrong words and I thought if they were just listening to English, we can really be critical but we are listening to the essence of what they are really saying. and their intention is right.
- AG: Yeah
- CM: You know, their intention is right, so I think that's when you see a person like that and you pray for them, that they can communicate better, clear to people that may not know, the background to where that word is coming from.
- AG: Yeah, I hear that a lot too, where I hear people back home talking and they get the words. but I get what they're saying, yeah.
- CM: Yeah, but think about the other people who are not familiar with colonization language.
- AG: ahhhah
- CM: And they're hearing a whole different message.
- AG: mmmm
- CM: And I think that, when a lot of times we pray, we pray that people would understand what it is we're saying. What it is we're asking for?
- AG: mmmm
- CM: You know, not so much the word but the essence of it, come through. and so when I think we are, when we are looking at life through a ceremony, it's also that you be our people, to become more ...
- 18:14 ...
- AG: Yep
- CM: You know we can, can continue, just like, we be frustrated with ourselves if we stayed in that same, um, arena of colonization talk all the time.
- AG: mmmm
- CM: Because, you know, I can just tell by your response and I know that we've, we just feel like it's negative and it's gone to the negative and it's stayed alive so long,

the intent was all good, that make us aware and move on, we didn't know where to move onto.

AG: mmm

CM: We didn't and, um, and I think, I think it was, um, when I would listen to May and she would just say, well just pray for them. that was her way of telling me, if you don't know, if you don't have the answer just pray and the answer will come and, and so, so I started doing that, I think oh yeah I'm really going to make a big difference, you know, little old me and they're over there important doing what they gotta do, how am I going to help them, um, so looking at how are we going to move out of something like that. then we start talking the trend of what's ...

19:40 healthy behaviours? What's healthy, what's healthy actions? And in one of my, um, I don't know who I heard this from because, you know, Angie the thing that scares me is what if we are on the forefront of national change? International and oral change and we get stuck here thinking that we're just stuck. because if we had the luxury of expertise of world historians to come and tell us what is happening in these other countries and what has happened and did they just go from colonized to the colonizer, um, but what about the other counties that didn't and this is where I kinda give my energy to. Okay in world history, the colonized just become the colonizer and we're saying not that, not good enough for us, as Blackfoot people, we want more than becoming the colonizer, because none of us feel good about that, colonizer, a role, so this no longer exists. What are we going to put there and I think that's our real driving question for us. What are we going to put here. um, we started looking at pedagogy of liberation, pedagogy of hope, um, I'd like to invite you to our house and show you some of our books, not that we've read them all, but the idea was that if we could, read them or give them to someone that could read them, that at some point we would all get into a discussion and have that person drag us a little farther into this area that we want to become and um, I was trying to think of this, oh what, what the name of this book, um, hmmm, it was something about

22:25 ... well anyway, yeah, off of one shelf I took all the themes of what are liberators to become, what is liberation, what is hope, it's hope and hopelessness, the pedagogy of hope. in 1996 we were so concerned of the colonization of us as a people, the leader, the leading authority who was writing had to do with literacy and that was Paulo Freire ... that wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. so the University of Nebraska in Omaha, I think, anyway every year they have a conference called pedagogy oppressed. and, and so I thought okay, if we don't know where the next step is, if we don't want to be the colonizer, we want to find some answers, how do we find it. and, so um, anyways, at that time I was in the leadership here and I funded and I think 8 or 10 people to go to the pedagogy oppress conference and the keynote speaker was Paulo Freire, and um, and we all came in and of course it was a conference all about oppression and that same concept and you can see the different levels of people in the steps of trying to find liberation or freedom or whatever we are. Looking for, and um, so of course he

himself is hard to understand, you know, but his thing, as long as you keep of people, um, illiterate they can't help themselves. that's his whole big movement and, um,

AG: You can't connect to others.

CM: Right, and therefore you control them, so, when we went there we watched plays of people, you know, people doing talks, um, I don't know, if people got caught in this part of colonization, and we couldn't step out of it because the force is that strong or was that strong at that time, um, but two years later, people coming back and talking about this potential of hope, um, we were going to send some other people, and about that time somebody shut it down and said, no, we're not going to fund or put up the funding to send them, um, what, trying to go back to that time, um, and trying remember the things that worked and didn't work, well when those people didn't get to go they would be like the next gen, the next age group from us. um, they would have had a different set of understanding and they may have been able to move it but the power at the time would not let them go to that conference and it was becoming and it became a conflict of our society here that people said, "Wow people are liking their ideas, that popularity jealousy thing, that goes on our reservation, community, that's what went on and it's right there, it is right there today, but what I'm noticing is that these younger people who are coming out of high school, even though we may say, well I doesn't seem like we made a big difference, they are coming out way more free speaking and rethinking, and you know, something happened

27:10 ...and so in the meantime, Paulo Freire movement was so strong, he was down at rocky boy.

AG: mmmmm

CM: Yeah, we went to the highlander, I want to say the, um, but Rosa Parks, remember when the black people had to sit in the back of the bus? They made it, she went there and she sat at the front of the bus, that how extreme the action was. In colonization, that what is fearful. Because I sometimes think that maybe you and I were describing as we started moving, we may even got afraid of our own potential.

AG: Yep.

CM: And that what could be the stopping force. because, because it's like, anything, it's like, um, earlier on when we talked about facing your fears and overcoming them. Those are just not as familiar to us, right now. You know, and when you are in leadership, or position out there in the forefront. If it's not familiar, you may stop out of the fear that you may not recognize, whereas back in our day when we were expected to take that chance to get out there and to bring resources to our tribes, our tribal group. People would put their lives on the line. I mean it was that extreme, compare to today, when, um, if we would stand up and talk about

something that we believe in. you don't hear Indian people shooting Indian people over their belief systems.

AG: Yeah.

CM: You know, we haven't. it doesn't come in that same fashion, so we are unfamiliar with it, whereas we look at it, I think it was last night, when they were talking about John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, you know, about the same time the American Indian movement it was here but it was sort of in the shadow, but following, you know, the same, so, what do we do about this area here and that's when we go plant seeds in people to will be positive, ask them, ask them to be positive and if it individual, you know, if you have one person asking three, or asking six, or you have a hundred asking three, or asking six, it will multiply your effect of positive.

AG: Yeah.

CM: It's pretty hard to stop.

AG: mmmm, I think that, we're unique and I know we're, this is going off topic but in that question of course you get me thinking, those various levels I love to think at [laughing] um, we have a different experience in the evolution of colonization as native American people because we are right end, almost right at the end of their trail, of the colonizers' trail, you know, we're kind of at the end of their (paused) this is the big one, this is the one where the world had to wake up because there's media, because we have social media, yeah, because we have Internet, we have our people being really quickly educated from our traditional mind to this white man's way of doing things. so we have an immediate transfer of knowledge, it's not filtered over generations, hundreds of years, it's actually really quick, that's how I see it, and that's the only benefit out of this (snaps finger) that we've been educated really fast in the white man's way. in terms of their use of technology. even though we don't think we are; we are, you know, we have PhD's, we have high level speakers, we have people like yourself building colleges in our communities, you know, these centers of thought and dialog and we're just going for it, right, we're just giving 'er [laughing], you know, and we have, the difference here is our land, you know, we got a real discussion about land, business is not over and we let them forget it's not over, you know, business of the day isn't done, we got some land to talk about and they know damn well we are not done with that discussion. and our political voice had just started, again, we had united after the whole prohibition periods, but we united and it is visible again, in the 60s like you said, I mean that's only 50 years ago, that is not a long time ago when you look at the history of colonization, that was pretty close, so the discussion is still there, the stories are still there, the, um, transfer of knowledge is still strong, even though we get all freaked out like we're losing blood for every hour, more elders are dying, but we still have, especially as Blackfoot people we still have really lots, so I think that, with a that I think, that everything is pointing back to our culture, everything is pointing back when we say what is the next

step? I think the same reason they put us down when they came and said god you guys are so primitive, why didn't you like make axes, and steel, and iron, why didn't you do that, and it was the same discussion then as it is today because why? to do what?

CM: Yep.

AG: To disturb? to hurt? to, you know, we had our ways of dealing, we even had, we even had respectful warfare with enemy tribes, we had an understanding much more civilized than your so-called civilization and John Trudeae talks about. So I don't think that it is what we want the same things as our ancestors did, we want live and we want to be well, we want to be connected with this land, we want to hear those discussion with the spirit world we are supposed to have because with our,...we don't work in that same capitalistic dogma as the western world.

CM: Right.

AG: You know, we don't have that same value, and we think, why was Oprah so popular? Because she had all these white people coming on and saying I'm so rich and wealthy but I got nothing inside of me. I don't know what I'm living for. You know, that whole loss of self and that whole loss of value and loss of purpose and us all we have is fricken purpose, we are slaves to our people for crying out loud, they own us, they use us, they abuse us. Our role is to help and we are raised with that, hey, our role is to help.

CM: You know, one of the things John, my husband, um, when he taught, um, he taught Blackfeet studies, I told him I'll create Blackfeet studies but you have to teach it.

AG: ...[laughing], that is a Blackfoot women right there. [both laugh] I'll create it, you're going to do it. [more laughing]. I love it.

[laughing]

CM: See I don't recognize that but when you point it out, I'm like, ooooh [laughing] but that was one of the things that came about is what are the strongest forces in Blackfoot, and he still says it today. Once in a while he will get into his lecturing and he'll say, the strongest force on the face of the earth is love and we have it.

AG: Wow.

CM: And we have it, and he says if you can move mountains with love on the flip side of the coin, we have, we as native people have that so strong, that, that almost destroyed us.

AG: Yeah.

- CM: And that we need to be conscious of. that we don't have to give up our love for each other and for other and for all things but we need to know when it's being challenged and being used as a weapon against us. And so when he, um, when he used to teach, he would always say, when we make a smudge, it the equal of unconditional love. You know, there is just no balance.
- AG: Yeah.
- CM: And so, I guess when we think about the, what are we going to create, one of the things that was created in the northern continent was the industrial revolution, we've only come back to find that, you know, since that happened we have pollution and all these other things. so we as native people don't want to go there and sometimes I think that why we struggle with what we call economic development.
- AG: mmmm
- CM: We had a pencil factory out here and I think they said a hundred and thirty people use to work there. And it seem to be going well, but it seemed the business side of it could use improvement but it was employing people but what were those people doing with their resources and I think that is the spoiled area that we are talking about, what is that we want to do? You know, I become a rancher, I leased all this land, I leased it because of all this grain, I probably could have done a lot with less, I had the resources to take a bigger share so I did, and the land is coming back to life, you know, because from being a child, I can remember walking where the is wind blowing and the grass blowing in the wind high, as compared to driving and seeing the fence line and just seeing nothing but ground, compared to little bit of grass on this side. so my choice is I like that freedom, of going up there and smelling all the fresh, um, and to see the land covering itself. because it may not initially look like I'm not doing anything, but I know the population of our people is growing at four times the national average. it won't always be a luxury to have that, but what we can keep that way in the meantime, we probably should.
- AG: mmmm
- CM: That's one real small, um, thing that I can do, it's big for me because it cost a lot to do that but it's small into the relation to the entire reservation. yeah. and so, you know I went to fort hall this summer and, um, I stayed with this lady and her family, um, for about five or six days and so she was tell me that their tribe down there they grow potatoes that's their big deal and hay. potatoes and a lot of hay. and she said what they do is give every tribal member ten tonne of hay, I can't remember if it's ten or fifty tonne a year, and, and of course they have their potatoes, I don't know what they call it but they have a name for it, I didn't really catch it, but anyway the people have that, and they just sell the rest, and then the money comes back in, but if you think about it it's almost too idealistic for us to

think that we could become an self-sufficient reservation, although it's probably possible.

AG: mmmm

CM: Because what do we really need to live on is food and clean water and were based on the source of the water that is coming out of the mountains. We are also probably able to produce our own food. See at one time in studying our history the reservation boarder fence was looked at as an angle

42:49 ...and the early part where people were discovering that, oh my god, here's how it was interpreted, we were fenced in.

AG: mmmm

CM: Ok. the Indian people were saying we were fenced in we couldn't leave the reservation, unless the agent gave us a pass, well to town, where are we going to go, Great Falls fair, it didn't even exist..

AG: How come you didn't come visit us?

CM: You know, that's different time, but that's not different conversation I'm having though. but in that sense where were people going to go in Montana? What purpose did we have? You know, um, and so, my mom has raised cows all her life, I think, and I was telling her "Hey mom, we should be getting more for our cattle off the reservation because everything up here is clean, compared to these feedlot cattle," and you know, I was like, and here I have my own little herd of cattle, and I'm saying that to myself, these are probably the healthiest animals we could be eating. so we should be going to tribal government and telling them buy this much beef and it should only be sold on the reservation stores and no other beef can come in and contaminate our food supply because we are so pure. but we don't have the hay fields so we buy hay to feed our cattle in the winter from off the reservation ...

44:45-50 ...okay so that all sounds good but then we have, um, those who are so use to going to the Kalispell fair, if you have a hundred vehicles going over there, you buying a hundred tanks of gas or would it be strange for us to travel in groups again, you know, and that kind of a new path to kind of venture on, just think when Calgary stampede goes on, just think if everybody from *Piikani* had the chance to go to the Calgary stampede, how much jealousy and other negatives would be avoided if everybody went, but, in relation to that we have other issues we have to overcome. I was always telling a friend of mine, I've been looking at our economy because my husband is like a philosopher and he always poses these questions and I know what he does, he sticks them in my head.

AG: [laughs]



CM: And so I was telling her last week, so what would be the strengths and the negatives of having a business on our reservation? And we started talking about god, we would have to have some real social change in order to be a successful business, because we have our crazy, what we call our crazy relatives who would come in and run our costumers off and we would have our relatives that think because you have business you owe them something.

AG: Yeah, you know.

CM: So all these social norms that we have now would have to become abnormal, I  
(46:47) ...

AG: Yeah

CM: And so we were talking about it, I said, a long time ago when I went to the pedagogy oppress conference, I said, these kids came in and did a play about their neighbourhood, and I told her maybe you and I should get up and do a play on what it would be like to have a business on your community/reservation. and I said, and we may be able to bring to light on something that other people want to say, no they should say, but we would do it in a play type atmosphere and see if we can shake open some new doors, thought, and ideas that could help make it more realistic. because a lot of the belief we have right now, um, you know, when I first seen those wind farms , I use to go to Brocket a lot for ceremonies, and when I first seen those wind farms I first thought they were on the reservation, it was like excited, because right on top north here on top of this old ridge, they call it

48:10 ...that turbine demonstration and um, we, we did it as a demonstration for one year only, into the grid but the grid was to heat and electricity of this building over here and it was a tribal project, we ask to have the funding for one year and that's what we did and at that time, this was before the rest of the area people were finding out about wind energy and finding out how much it would cost to get on the grid, going to give power for west coast and east coast, comparison prices, we were like, right there at that time but anyway same thing happened, a lawyer and another guy thought that they could, they knew that this was successful and on a bigger scale they made it successful. but they decided they wanted to do it themselves and wanted to be on board and didn't want to be included, the college and at that time the college had a real good name for being successful, anyway, it ended up happening they started a new board and the board member got into a fight, nothing ever happened, so what we come back to are what are the answers to here? I think just as we get tired of talking about colonization, in order to get here, we have to talk about something more concrete to us local to get this direction but we don't keep it here long enough for it to get negative, sad and hurtful, and lot of times I think that's where and that is what has happened, especially with tribal government because even though it's ready to

move to the next step, they will pull it back and refocus it here. When it's really ready for here.

AG: Yeah.

CM: And I think, you know, when I first seen your guys gift shop at the Head Smashed in Buffalo Jump the quality of the product was really good and they were coming from your crafts people from your reservation, and I thought if I were going to buy real stuff this is where I am going to go, and um, I haven't been there in a long time, shoot maybe ten years but I don't think ten years, but we have to create as today's world, we have to create a reason for us to go to Brocket, to go to Cluny, to go to Standoff, to Browning, there has to be an economic reason for us to travel like that.

AG: Yeah, yeah.

CM: And when we create that, we not only created in the government eyes, international market, but we can go back to what probably Dr. Little Bear knows the best of trade, trade across the line we would be on the forefront of that.

AG: Yeah.

CM: But that idea needs a table full of people to sort it through, give it a thought to sort it through. but I'm not sure what it is, the US has problems with the beef, every now and then they have some trade reason but I think that we the Blackfoot people really thought through our potential we would be able to overcome our, the things we are talking about on a bigger scale, and if we let our prayer lead the way we should be successful.

AG: Yes we should.

CM: And success may not be defined as multimillionaires but it will be fighting for whatever it is that what it is that is right for us.

AG: That is a really nice, um, on the flip side, like we have been talking about, the human experience we do need to be having discussion about capacity building economics and I used to remember sitting on this investment corporation for *Piikani* when our settlement first fell through they did all these boards, and I sat on one and I remember, you know Brian Jackson, he used to own the bundle, he sat on that board and he'd start with prayer, the Blackfoot prayer, and there were other member of council that were like full gospel, Christian, and one of them made a comment, like, prayer doesn't belong at this table, we're not talking about culture, this is money, and I sat there and I was really disturbed, I so angry, because I kept bring up, I guess I was feeling the conscience, you know at that table, I felt like the conscience for the people, I was against the high honorariums, I was against all these different thing that we were doing, that were really questioned, questionable, that the board still faces ridicule for today. and I just remembered that comment and I thought maybe if prayer was really, really,

relevant at that corporation as well as all these other areas that settlement would be more successful but everybody lost track of that and the (naming other tribes ...)

55:10 Do a really nice discussion piece, that um, what's his name, it's called faith keepers<sup>13</sup> his documentary Oren Lyons ...

55:17 ...

CM: Oh yeah.

AG: Yeah, he does a real nice, he talks about how America adopted the ideals of democracy and how they gave him all these good things and understanding, but they said you keep prayer at the center of everything. and he said this is one of the first things they did, separate church and state and they said you broke it, you wrecked it, it's not our motto, you know, like they were trying to tell them you need to remember, you know, prayer first before everything, but when we talk about this self-determination I also think about the Hutterites, they are just like forget you world, we're going to do our own thing and grow and grow and continue to be fluent in their language, and everything else and they are pretty remarkable that way.

CM: Built into their system.

AG: Yeah, yeah, I agree with that.

CM: Because I thought, lately I've been seeing them in the stores and stuff and think what are you doing in here, yeah, don't do what we did.

AG: Yeah.

CM: You know.

AG: They're kinda wearing like, fancy glasses and runners.

CM: And little girls are buying perfume.

Both [laughing]

AG: You know I thought about that too; don't get blurred by the glamour and the glitz.

Both [laughing]

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<sup>13</sup> Native American Chief Oren Lyons is a leader in the international environmental movement; he is featured and referred to as the *Faithkeeper* in a 1991 PBS documentary, produced and hosted by Bill Moyers.

CM: i know.

AG: It's cute, ok, why don't we—ah, it's 5 o'clock—let's talk about the prayer. Are you comfortable reciting a prayer with me?

CM: mmmm

AG: Okay and um, when I'm done with transcribing this inscription I'm going to give it to you all, give you a copy on a CD, and give you the printed transcripts and I'm going to look at the prayer and take the good things that come out of that, alongside the other prayers that I have received and you will always have that option to say that this is misinterpreted and I don't want this in there, and you know, you'll always have that but I'll give you a deadline but after that you can't say anything. [both laughing] No, I'm kidding.

CM: No I hear yah. I know it, I know what it's about.

AG: You know the who song and dance of this is but if you feel comfortable with it now, with providing a prayer, for myself, or whatever prayer you want to give is going to be great for me.

CM: Okay ... [speaking in Blackfoot]

58:20–58:44 Angela, our work that is successful and it helps all the people and that, they gain and hail from life that we would like to move into and be undefined into a good way and to help us to be good people and understand the Indian ways to look after our children, grandchildren, our brother and sisters, all of our relatives, help our band to grow, helps us to be strong, that our children be born healthy, and we could have a good society, look after our elders those who are wise in their ways, let them be generous with their knowledge, and let it be understood, to those who are receiving it, we ask that you help all of our schools and the people who work within them, to be wise in their actions in the treatment of our children so that they can grow to be healthy adults, help the adults in our community to understand the Indian ways and smudge, and with all the influences they've had they stay true to their heart and soul that was given to them, we ask that you pity us all and too keep us safe in our travels and our minds be clear, let us be wise in our actions, intelligent and our thoughts, help us to be able to work together in a good way and all of our young people to be happy, keep us strong, keep us wise, let us grow to be a good society and the things that we should lead let us to continue to have the strength and courage to get up each day to live a strong and happy life and I ask you to look after all the old people, but in their old age but if they haven't been able contribute, give then the resources to contribute to the knowledge of our beings, especially those who are quite and sad that their spirit find health and happiness of their own to wake up and enjoy this life,

1:01:05 [speaking Blackfoot]

- AG: mmm Thank you. um, for the record, could you give me your Indian name and what it means.
- CM: My Blackfoot name is...and it's translated in short English as *medicane wolf woman*. It came from a dream I had about some cliffs out by Medicine River where I live. A lot of people now translate um, to English as, um, *medicine wolf women*, but a lot of the Blackfoot speakers say *ahpisi* is coyote but it came from a dream of wolves. and George Kicking Women translated it, as the big coyote, which is the wolf and they were white and they were showing me, they were showing me that if you look west and would look more of a kinda of a brown tan, light tannish colour but when they would all stand on the cliffs and look east they would all be pure white
- AG: mmmm
- CM: That's where my name come from.
- AG: Wow
- CM: That a ceremony that was going on.
- AG: Geez, that beautiful, beautiful name.
- CM: Yep.
- AG: Well, it's certainly been a pleasure, I just, I just excited to go and transcribe and listen and continue to hear, I know everytime I go through and listen to I know I'm going to hear different themes, did you want me to, how do you want me to address you in, like I had talk about in the consent form in English name, Blackfoot name, both?
- CM: Umm, you can do my Blackfoot name, um, that would be okay, because the one that you know my own children and grandchild, I would like to someday, I know everyone will read it but as someday as you write your paper, I would someday like my grandkids to read it.
- AG: Ok, so should I set you in the beginning as Carol Murray and then utilize your Blackfoot name throughout.
- CM: Yep, yep
- AG: That's what you like?
- CM: Yeah.
- AG: Ok, I can do that.
- CM: Yeah, and it will be good for them.

AG: Yeah, oh yeah, to learn.

CM: you know, cause like I said this day will never happen again.

AG: It's funny how you said that again because Andrew Blackwater said, I swear you guys are all on the same thinking but that's really good for all the finding because it's all consistent and the more studies we can have with our Blackfoot tribes we just build our cases stronger, and me of course always thinking politically.

CM: Well not yet.

AG: Yeah.

CM: Because you know, no one can ever, make me believe in the rest of my life that we don't function and very part of it is politically, we always know we

1:04:38 ... to something because if we didn't our life would be meaningless and the political nature was part of it.

AG: I think we're all natural politicians and we're all natural psychologists and with that said I'm going to stop recording and thank you for knowledge and...

CM: Thank you for picking me to be one of your interviewees.

AG: Thank you, I enjoyed it.

CM: Me too.

[End of interview.]

## Appendix D

### Allan Pard

To protect the misappropriation of the interviews and Indigenous knowledge, no part of Appendix D of this thesis can be reproduced in any shape or form without Allan Pard's permission.

#### October 2011

AG: As discussed earlier with yourself what is your Blackfoot name?

AP: ...[Blackfoot term]... which means Iron Shirt. Iron Shirt, that goes back to one of my grandfathers from the past...[Blackfoot term]... Brings Down the Sun. His other name was...[Blackfoot term]... Running Wolf and he was a minor Chief here but he was originally from Southern Peigan. It would be around the 1850, around that era, around the 1860s when liquor and they were trading already, but they got into a family dispute with his brother, they got into a fight. As a result of that dispute he moved up here to the North Peigans, but his other name was Iron Shirt that was his dad's name. Iron Shirt his other name was...[Blackfoot term]... meaning One Big Back. But that is a part of some of my relatives. Those kinds of names we usually hand them down they are like clan names. We keep them in the family.

AG: Would you like in the thesis just before we get into the questions would you like to be referred by your Blackfoot name or how would you like to be referred?

AP: Well because Blackfoot names change and are given to other people I guess if there was a qualifier in that just so that in the future there can be another Iron Shirt and he can say I never said that. My name's Iron Shirt and I never said that.

AG: Okay so we will stick with Allan.

AP: Yeah you might have to stick with that.

AG: So I had mentioned before my background is in Counseling Psychology and the work I am doing on my thesis is related to the field of psychology. However, I guess before I had gone into my graduate program I was on my path to really understanding or trying to understand a lot of our different ways as Indian people spiritually. For myself it had given me a lot of strength and a lot of ability to be resilient and get through a lot of different things, getting through school with children, and facing divorce and separation. With the loss of my mother more recently. Spiritually was the one and only thing that really helped me through a lot

of it, and knowing that I knew it was a very significant healing property. It's very significant in helping us cope psychologically and the reason I choose to study prayer and spirituality, more kind of looking at what prayer means. It was trying to understand how it shapes our well-being. So, I have some areas I have been trying to get at. I had originally thought that when we looked at Blackfoot prayers, specifically Blackfoot, and I am sure it is similar to other Indigenous people, being Blackfoot and wanting to look at the Blackfoot prayer. What does the prayer say on how to live? And are those prayers today valid in our way do they give us ingredients for life? And if we follow those beings of the prayers is that ingredients to a well-rounded psychologically healthy lifestyle? So this is my hunch, I don't know a lot of the prayers. I have learned in and out of my life some of them but to really take a few of them from these interviews and really go through them and look at the theme and the main characteristics of what they mean. Then kind of come out with some model. So that is my goal. But, I had asked you earlier if you could provide a recital of a prayer and I think we will get to that after I would like to ask you some, about four questions or four areas, before we get to that. The first question is really important to identity. Now one of the reasons I choose to look at identity was because this seems to be one of our biggest problems as Indian people today is the loss of identity and especially for our young people. They are more grasping for identities in main stream, upper class, hip hop all these different trends, we are seeing because our youth do not know who they are and where they stand. My first question is how does prayer in Blackfoot traditional form shape our identity?

AP: In order to have a Blackfoot worldview, how we perceive the world, worldview is provided by our opinions as Blackfoot people and our beliefs as Blackfoot people. Being the people that we are, we just don't dissect spirituality from our life or our philosophy or our thinking. They are intertwined, it's all holistic now. So it's like layers. Prayers are so part and parcel to our existence and our ways, our identity. How we pray and our understanding of prayers, identifies us so much as a people. Especially Indigenous people you can say these are Blackfoot people. Other tribes can identify you on how you practice your ways and how you do things. Our protocols, it all basically depicts who we are as people. For example, how we pray with pipes, there is a certain protocol. Other tribes may do other things and do other gestures with those pipes that are foreign to our ways of doing things. If I was at ceremony I could point out people who don't know how to do the Blackfoot way of handling pipes. I look at them and the pipe itself. The pipe itself can tell me if it's a Blackfoot pipe or not. We fix things, according to how we do things. We don't use the Red Bull pipes for our smoking prayer pipes, we use the acorn shape pipes and you can tell by looking at the pipe itself. You never see those t-bone pipes in the past, we used tubular pipes with the cigar holder those were our ancient pipes, our Beaver pipes. So anything and everything about prayers, regalia how we painted ourselves, were so to distinguish ourselves from other tribes. Our symbols we use, or how we use the kind of paints we use, even though some other tribes have used the red oker paint. We had different ways of painting to distinguish ourselves from other tribes. For that matter, if you are really involved in our spirituality, you can identify the bundle where these paints



come from. So if somebody got painted, I would know exactly who and what society or what bundle by how they got painted because we have certain protocols we use. So yeah, our prayers are rock solid and identifies to us who we are as people and how we pray. Our expression and how we smudge, even today in modern times. Other tribes burn sweet grass, when we burn something it is bad, it's bad to us. Again this is based on how we perceive something that is burning. I will give you the Cole's version of how we did things. This man wanted his wife back and his wife was dead so he went to the spirit world and brought her back he could do anything and everything with his wife the only thing he couldn't do was hit her with a fire stick and he got mad and hit her and she turned back into an animal and took off. As a result, we didn't like things that were burnt, it's an association of the spirit world, so we always avoid it, things that were burnt. We don't burn the sweet grass, it's almost like you are wishing to be in the spirit world. So that's why we use incense things, take it out of the fire, use the incense things, on a coal, a wood coal, a hot coal, we place it on our altar and that's what we make our smudge on. Those things alone are how we do things from different tribes.

AG: So these things that you talk about, it's a learning for me as well, but when we look at the majority of our people, let's just look at *Piikani*. The majority of our people my age or younger, even older, they don't have this seasoned knowledge that you have. So what are we facing now? How is this not knowing in-depth knowledge because the more you go through our Blackfoot teachings, it's like you graduate to different levels right?

AP: Yes.

AG: And people who are having zero, to minimal, to mixed with other tribal customs, where is this leaving our identity, how do we...?

AP: There is a particular group of us traditionalists that basically are very conservative. We don't want to change things. We want to maintain things how our ancestors have maintained things. Everything we do in our prayers, in our spirituality, has a purpose or a reason. In the Blackfoot term...

14:25 ...meaning it's a nothing thing. Nowadays people can pull things out of the air and add water and it's there. Our prayers and ways come directly from the source, from the spirits and the Creator and it's been handed down generation to generation to different people. It's referred to as *poomahksin*, meaning the buying, the acquiring of power, the purchase of power.

AG: Can you talk a little bit about that?

AP: Well there is public knowledge in our spirituality and prayers. Then there is sacred knowledge. Knowledge only given to the people who are ready to go to the next level and they have to have some background knowledge before they proceed. For example in the grading system in school programs and university,

you just don't go to a Dean and say give me a degree or my masters now, it's a process of learning. Same way as our spirituality. There is a process and protocol and you go through that and it is a lifelong learning process....

16:19... Meaning in particular, with us Blackfoot people, I don't know how it is with other tribes. It's the transferring of knowledge and power and sacred rites and authorities, that's what it represents. If you have a dream and you dream and it's a pretty vivid dream, part of your public knowledge should be that you don't go and interpret the dream yourself. You go to an elder who has acquired the wisdom and knowledge of interpreting dreams. So you go to this elder to get your dream interpreted....

17:17... Meaning you just don't do things yourself, or interpret things. You go to the knowledge base first, like you don't give yourself a degree, you go to the university to get your degree. So this public knowledge, you would go to this elder to seek advice and once you seek advice, the elder will have more in-depth knowledge to interrupt those dreams and give you direction. For what you want to do, part of our worldview is that we believe dreams predict our future. We believe in our dreams and they give us spiritual direction and they give us warnings. We have that as public knowledge about dreams. They are either going to give spiritual instructions or the future or get warnings. So when you dream something vivid you go to an elder to seek proper interpretation to make sure you're on the right track. That is our custom, our way of handling things. I don't know about other tribes. I don't know much about other tribes but I know our ways....

19:24... Meaning there will be a day in your formative years that the first thing is going to happen that you cannot do anything as a Blackfoot person in this world without a Blackfoot name. You can't join anything or any society, you cannot function in this world without a Blackfoot name. So the first thing done for you by your parent of the child, is to be given a Blackfoot name. That is their introduction into this world and when they are given this name they call upon the universe and all the positive forces, and say here is this person in front of you and I am going to name this person. Once that person calls out that new name then he shoves you into this new world, this Blackfoot world, with this name. When a person is going to pray for you or talk about you they are going to use this name. There starts your identity. You are identified as that Blackfoot person with that Blackfoot name.

AG: How many people do you believe have Blackfoot names?

AP: Well in my generation most of us, 90% have Blackfoot names, I believe that is still persistent in my generation. Now when it comes to your generation and younger I would easily say 30-40% will have Blackfoot names and they don't understand the importance of it and the Blackfoot worldview.

- AG: So do you think the naming of the generations, mine and younger, do you think it is the responsibility of the parent? And so there was a break there obviously, with the change of numbers?
- AP: I think it is related to the encroachment and intrusion of white way, mainstream, of course the colonization that has happened and the residential school. Those things have impacted us big time and today for the few people with their spirituality still intact, they are still being bombarded by mainstream. We are still having to compete with mainstream for the interests of our youth and as these things continue to happen, it's almost like a losing battle we're facing now.
- AG: I thought about that too, it's sad as there is such a threat to the loss of who we are
- AP: I know. Even for us Blackfoot, our most highly regarded ceremonies back in the day, when the Blackfoot worldview was intact. It was the Beaver ceremonies, they used to claim like 700 songs were sung in a Beaver Bundle, and 250 in tobacco planting and 101 for the Sundance Bundle. The Sundance song is a part of the Beaver Bundle, the Sundance headdress. So to conduct a Beaver Bundle ceremony you should have been a past owner, it's a part of the protocol and you cannot run those ceremonies until you know the songs. But, now we're left with the basic generic ways of running these ceremonies and we're left with what we could salvage to do the songs and the dances. What is the population of the Southern Peigan? I would say 30–40, there is 70,000 South Peigan. *Siksika* has 7000–8000, the Bloods have over 11,000, were getting close to 4000. There is only two Blackfoot persons that can do those ceremonies and sings those songs the correct way and there is maybe one other that attempts at it, well two others that attempt at it, so there is four left that can do those ceremonies. It's like that with our Sundance Camp, not our circle ceremonies, some are strong, some of our really treasured ceremonies. We're losing it big time.
- AG: Is there a strong mentorship?
- AP: For some of the societies but not for the pipes, not the Thunder Medicine pipe, not the Beaver Medicine pipe, not the Sundance. There is a real limited, I mean limited. It's really bad.
- AG: Why is that?
- AP: The impacts.
- AG: There is not enough interest?
- AP: Not enough interest. Everybody wants to be a white guy. Everyone wants you know, hip hop. Everyone wants to be a rock star. No one wants to be Indian. If they want to be Indian they want to be an instant Indian and take the powwow trail. These ceremonies, like my spirituality, started happening when I started going to college. It happened through traditional means of our beliefs. I was being approached by spirits. I went to seek advice. I went to see the old ladies who were

alive. Joe Crow Shoe's mom, Mrs. Buffalo was still alive, Mrs., Many Guns was still alive and my grandmother said go see them. So they just told me I had to do what my ancestors have done in the past and take a more active role in our spirituality. I played a supportive role and under a mentorship in the 1970s. I never wanted to take more obligated, to take more responsibility, because I never thought I was deserving. Things evolved to a point where all of sudden our elders were gone and died off. Then nobody was there to answer the bell and a lot of the people in these ceremonies knew I was heavily involved in the mentorship but thought maybe I had to take on more responsibly. Later on I had taken on bundles and when I transferred them I was able to run the ceremonies. So after you get your name in this Blackfoot life, if you were brought up as female then you hang around with the females and your grandmother and your mother and your parents, especially your older siblings, will participate in your upbringing and ensuring you understand protocol and understanding what a good Blackfoot person and particular a good Blackfoot woman. And as you require more responsibility, they see to it sometimes your direction unfolds to you. If you're brought up as a...

29:37 ...grandfather child or grandparent child, that knowledge will come to you automatically because the grandparents raise you give you all this tribal knowledge and stories that go with that. If your...

30:02...\_ favourite child you would get that and be spoiled rotten and everything you want and still you turn out like a grandfather child. They're your direction, we have a saying in our Blackfoot way,...\_

30:27...the Creator chooses your path for you. Life happens accordingly and unfolds for you and you're in your proper path.

AG: How would one might know that? That they are on the right path?

AP: By maintaining good relations with your elders. You go to people, your support system, in this process, you develop a support system that's out there. I was told not to go to my close relatives to learn because my close relatives because my close relatives might bend the rules for me and take short cuts for me and I always went to complete strangers. I was taught very strict and rigid systems. So let's say the men sent a young man to hang out with older siblings and uncles, and grandparents and they teach him manhood, man things, hunting, skills, etc. Eventually his life shapes, back in them days, when you're almost reaching puberty, you were reaching towards your vision quest. You will go seek help you need if you're going to be a successful person. Just like a degree, a person today, you need your degree for a good job. Back then you need to go for your spiritual quest so you could be a good warrior and good provider and be somebody. Otherwise you weren't worth nothing.

AG: Do you think that is still relevant today the vision quest?

- AP: I think it is still relevant, I think it's still very important. Let me back track when you're born, before your name is given, your umbilical cord is taken and that's kept. If you're a boy a lizard is sewn and then your clan design are sewn on that lizard where that cord is kept in. That is to keep you intact. That cord is your connection to the spirit world and this real world you're born into. It's was always keep to make ensure your spirit didn't go astray. Our belief is that if your spirit goes astray you're not functioning accordingly, mentally, physically, spiritually. You always need your spirit by you. The women would be in the form of a snake. Nowadays when people are born, some elders were telling me yeah they just throw them in the garbage, that why are people so like garbage nowadays. Using that kind of a saying.
- AG: How can that be rectified?
- AP: I think if people knew about it, a lot of our people don't about these things.
- AG: If they got rid of their umbilical and didn't really realize it what can they do? Is there anything they can do?
- AP: Well it's like you're either pregnant or not. You cannot always be pregnant. I know what you are saying. There is no real recourse in that regards, it already happened. The recourse you do is you just pay homage and try and do the upmost to maintain your spirituality, your protocol as a good Blackfoot citizen. So that is your recourse, you just try live your life as best as you can, the will be our responsibility. This whole journey I'm taking you on is *Atsimoiskaan*, our prayers, is in order to understand our prayers, you've got to have that worldview and it starts from birth and on, you know lifelong learning. This is where you're taught to appreciate the wisdom and knowledge of your older people, your elders, your go to, your support system. It was a communal effort in child rearing, because of permissiveness, and everybody took part in your childrearing and it's even in our closing remark in our prayers, it's like our amen. Child rearing is part of what we always request in our ending of our prayers, child rearing skills, parental skills, *Niistowastsimman*, so we understand the importance to the utmost of childrearing, is paramount thing.
- AG: So a lot of these things you have mention are very um preventative. And would have been the process pre-colonization. I am always interested because I deal with clients as a therapist, that are what we would call culturally blank, very assimilated and very dysfunctional, very colonized. A lot of alcoholism and violence and those things. In dealing with that body of people of brokenness I can't help think about the intervention. Where's the intervention?
- AP: Well part of our way is you never see a traditional Indian standing behind a podium, you never see a Blackfoot traditional ceremonialist standing behind a podium preaching about his religion, we just don't do that. Part of it is because we never teach unless were asked. I would never imposed unto anybody, our ways of how I think, unless I was asked. You have to seek it, like seeking a vision, you

want to acquire this knowledge, go seek it, go get it. That is one of our biggest rules, because basically if we impose, and we run into all these confrontational and negative things that may happen, and that probably because of that divine intervention, divine unfolding, this is the way *Istopatopiohp* meant things to be. So it's like non-interference, only until were asked we will get involved. Otherwise we don't do that, it's not our custom to do that. We can bring a horse to water, but not force it to drink. That's probably part of our down fall too, because we don't preach it or talk about it enough. I think I had to really breach protocol to start talking more about it and sharing this knowledge because of my concern of it disappearing. If I don't talk about it, I guess a lot of real great elders, people a thousand times better than I, as a ceremonialist. People of the past, back in the 1880s, already started sharing this information. Walter McClintock was a, I don't know if you're familiar with his book called the Old North Trail, well he came to talk to the Blackfoot people. And he was in Browning, and in Browning, and Walter McClintock said I want to go to the wisest medicine man, he was talking that to *Oonistaah*, the Calf. The Calf told him ok, I will take you to the wisest medicine man we have and his name is Brings Down the Sun. He lives down the hill from here. I will take you to him to learn some of this knowledge. Gee I lost my train of thought.

AG: Sharing of knowledge kind of thing...

AP: Oh yeah, so those kind of people willingly shared their information, their knowledge. Their kind of thinking was that the white people are here and what's going to happen in the future. There was this one tape, these wax cylinders, that was in this museum, the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles. I was listening to this one, these cylinders, wax cylinders were taped in 1898. One of them was White Calf, the head Chief in Browning but he was also a Beaver man, the chief of the Beaver Medicine people. Anyway, he was singing this song that were put onto these tapes, and all of a sudden he stops singing and he says you who are listening to me, if you understand what I'm saying, it's because of you that I have recorded these songs. It just kind of spooked the heck out of me. So that changed my opinion about recording. And then the other thing that happened too was I was so thankful that I was able to see pictures of my relatives of the past because then I can associate with them more. That's pretty cool because these are my relatives. And so that's where I started thinking, well, I think recording and sharing more of our knowledge is going to help our people, not only our people, but if we share more, I'm not saying our real sacred knowledge, but we share our public knowledge with the outside world maybe there will be better understanding and better relationship between our people and the mainstream. But we are almost like competing for our children's interest because if everything is streamlined in this whole mainstream process of education, to teach our children to become good white people, and it's a competing interest. There's nothing there that motivates our people to become involved in our ways. Our ways are not cool anymore, it's not cool to be an Indian, it's a lot cooler to be mainstream.

AG: I think it's cool to be Indian.

AP: That's why I hang in there, I think more of our people have to start thinking like that, to have a better appreciation of themselves. The reason why people like you who think it's cool to be an Indian is because you have done some self-healing. But look at these younger children who are searching for an identity and don't know who they are or what they are. Nobody is providing that to them. That was the job of the community and the extended family, to provide those things and that's why we are so fragmented and all this diversity that has happened to us and why we are losing our identity. So at the end of the day, after a person reached puberty, then he, I will just talk from the men's perspective, makes it shorter. Then the man after he's reached puberty takes on an adult name, so his world has changed. He takes on this adult name and he takes on adult responsibilities and that's when, at that point it's going to be decided how deep into our spirituality is he going to get involved. Usually once you put one foot you might as well put the other foot in, because it's never ending, it just keeps going further and further. So it usually starts at that adult level. At the childhood level, the formative years, basically they're just taught reverence and regard to respect these things and to have an appreciation. At that time they are given all the creation stories, and the moral stories, moral builders like *Napi*, and what not. When you hear about *Napi*, all you will basically be thinking, because that's how I was brought, I'm thinking to myself I am not going to be like *Napi*, because he's such a misfit you know. So morals and values are done through them stories. So that your Blackfoot thinking is starting to develop through those oral origin stories, creation stories, all that basic foundation is placed on to you. I think I was telling you about my grandmother, my great grandmother. She would come and visit, my grandmother and I would take her home in the evening. It was already getting dark, it was probably like in between a quarter of mile and half a mile, to me it looked like ten miles, to me when I was young. Anyway my grandmother would say you have to take her, help her get back home because she was losing her eye sight, I'd have to hold her and taking her back on the path with her cane back home. I would hold her and she would have her cane and taking her on the path back home, and she would stop and start pointing up to the stars and telling me the names of the stars. And some of the quick Cole's version of the stories behind them. So I started being introduced to our Blackfoot cosmology. The sun was represented the Creator or the source of the life and that his wife was the moon, the old lady. Their son was Morning Star and that's who we pray to, that's the one who gives us life. Mistaken morning star is the one that person who went into the spirit world, went into the heavens, he came back with our Blackfoot spirituality, our prayers. Either known as *Piahkspii*, *kiiyii*, Scarface and his other name is *Pahksiipisoo*, Mistaken Morning Star. So once you start learning those stories, then you start knowing you're ready for your path as you become an adult. It's so important, so paramount, to know the creation stories and our Blackfoot cosmology. The Blackfoot cosmology doesn't just stop at the sun, the moon and morning star. There's the Blackfoot brothers, the seven Blackfoot brothers, that's the big dipper, their the ones that went into the sky and there is a big story behind that. And they help look over and watch the Blackfoot people. There is the lost children, Pilates, that are up in the sky. They're up there, sent up there to watch

over the Blackfoot people. Big stories behind those. So then the north star is called Star Boy. The story about the women who married *Soowatsakii*, Tail Feathers Woman, she married Morning Star. A young girl looking up in the sky, twinkling sky, the stars, and she told her friends, gee that star that's really bright and twinkly, I'd marry that star. And the next night there was a man blocking her way, she was coming back from hauling water, that night, that evening. And every time she tried to pass this person, this person blocked her. Finally she just stood there so this guy took his robe off and he was this gorgeous, and she just fell in love with this guy. And he told her I am that star you said you wanted to marry and I came here to get you, you have to come with me now. So anyway they went up into the heavens and she was told she can do anything in that world but not to pick the big turnip, the big holy turnip. So one day curiosity got the best of her of course and she tried to dig it out, and so she couldn't really dig it out so she called on these cranes to come and help her, and they said yeah we can help with that. So they sang their power song and hitting where the ground was and she used a root digger to do the same thing and finally they loosened up the dirt and she was able to pull that turnip out and low and behold there was a hole in the sky and she seen her camp of her people and all of a sudden she got struck by loneliness and despair. Of course they knew what had happened and they said well you've done it now, we have to put you back and return you to the world you come from. So they started cutting up buffalo hides, *siipatpiitaaksin*, that's why the cutting of hides is symbolic in the medicine lodge as it represents how she was going to be brought down. They bring her down and she has this son, almost a year old from Morning Star. They told her don't let your son touch the earth, the ground, for a year then he will be okay. But he rolled off the bed one day. When she lift up the covers there was just a piece of fungus, and he we went up and that hole, he blocked that hole, that North star, so we call him star boy, *Kakatoospoomapii*. So when I talk like this, you will know why I said there is a lot of substance to our ways, it's not just pulled out of the air, there is all this background knowledge and information you will acquire and sometimes it's lifelong learning to acquire and understand our situation. You have grown up with this background and information and you start choosing your path and you become a person of achievement. You have achieved things so you change your name and you take an achievement name basically. One of your successful relatives in the past, you take a name from one of your successful relatives. Then after that it's up to you, if you want to change your name. Blackfoot's change their name like if you want to alter your destiny, it's like changing a new leaf, turning a new leaf, you can change your name. If things are so shitty in your life, time to leave this name behind and start new, clean slate, so we change our name.

AG: That is important, I think with some people who are wanting to...

AP: I am talking about the men. The women are gifted. The women have to understand that they are special and gifted. They don't have to do the things that men do. We're the unfortunate misfits. The Creator blessed women. The woman just has to have the name and live her life accordingly, follow protocol, do her due diligence as a woman. Because she is gifted with bearing children. So,



therefore they don't have to go out and seek a vision, they don't have to change their name because if they just pray, focus and concentrate, Creator listens to them. Like my great grandmother she put up Sundances. She didn't have to go out and seek her vision or anything. That spirit came to her house and gave her doctoring powers. She was able to doctor. She said she woke up this one night and wondering how come, it was weather like this but colder and she woke up, thought that it was her dad that had come back and was making fire for her. So she just went back to sleep. Next thing she woke up and realized it wasn't her dad, who was this person. In between then she didn't describe then what this spirit had did to her to give her her power. So I was fortunate that I had relatives and people involved in our traditions and that's how I was exposed to a little bit more, more so than people at my age, because of our background, we were basically trying to conserve our ways. Because back in the day a lot of people would report people doing ceremonies to the Indian agent, and they were cut off rations. Or else they were reported to the police because it was outlawed to practice our ways. Therefore a lot of people went underground. The die hards.

AG: Do you think going underground impacted the ceremonies today?

AP: Oh big time. That's why we're this close to losing them all together.

AG: Did it actually change ceremonies themselves?

AP: No. Because we're so conditioned not to alter, not to steer away. Like a lot of people think it's different. The major changes started happening when, this goes back to the coming of white people. When, if a Sundance woman is going to put up a Sundance she had to cut and dry and smoke 100 buffalo tongues. So when there was no buffalo, they had to use beef. I can only just think what they were going through. I had a great grandmother that was told, because she put up Sundances too, that if she ever ate beef that she would die. And this one time she was served beef stew, her, she didn't really know, overlooked it, and she ate this beef stew and she hemorrhage and died. So buffalo was replaced by cattle for a while, because we couldn't go out and hunt the animals that we hunted, we were restricted to the reserve. So we didn't have a lot of things we need to function appropriate, accordingly. So we substituted to continue to go on. When we could, we always tried to go back to what we could use. Same with our ceremonies. I will sing some songs, some of those songs in the beaver ceremony, those songs haven't changed, because I heard those songs, they haven't changed from over a 100 years ago. Even at that, when it comes to *poomahksin*, the transferring of knowledge, White Calf would go back to the people who transferred to him, and it just keeps going back and back and back until you actually come to the origin story of the original person that got the Beaver Bundle from the actual Beaver. So it just goes back like that. So in our prayers sometimes we call upon those people, like we will call upon White Calf and I would call upon people who have transferred to me to come and help with my prayers. I am not praying to them, I'm just telling them to come help with my prayers. And I would tell them, the way that you were so accurate with your prayers, meaning the smudges, I want

my prayers to be accurate like that. Because this person, because I am praying for, because I am praying for that person to have accurate smudges, and when he request things that they happen. That's what we mean by *akiinamatosiiman*. So when call upon those people who have transferred knowledge and rites to us, they are bringing in those people from the past to help with these prayers. Because when we make a prayer or call upon our Blackfoot cosmology, we call upon all those key, like the Creator or the source of life, his wife, Morning Star, the seven Blackfoot Brothers, the lost children and we have the sky beings. Everything that is in the sky whether it's a star, whether it's an abstract, like the Thunder Bird or the cloud or thunder whatever is in the sky, we refer to them as the Sky Beings, *sboomapiiks*. Whatever is here in this world or this earth, we call them *tsakomiitapiiks*. Whether they are animals, the grass, or the mountains, *tsakomiitapiiks*. Then *sawiiitapiiksm*, the water beings. So that's what makes up the whole thing of positive forces in the universe, the Blackfoot world.

AG: You talk about the accuracy of the songs, the protocols, the methods, the whole methodology of it. Does that have to do with creating the right energy combinations that engage all of these beings? It's like a perfect calculation.

AP: Yes, yes, that is what is about. That is what we strive for to do that so that we get this source.

AG: That is a difficult task

AP: Well sometimes it's not me that's doing it, it's up to that person that transferred to me, that's his responsibility and that person beyond, it just keeps going back and that's why we do that. Because if I am just a mediator or a medium, I'm just a person with that responsibility that's doing it and calling it and just working. So the blame shouldn't lie on me. At the end of the day in our Blackfoot spirituality. This is like buying a great big, a new Harry Potter book. You go to the end of the bookcase and read the summary of the book, so I am giving you a summary, so at the end of the day, of this whole Blackfoot spirituality, you will never get it in writing. I don't know if there are elders out there, I have tried to preach it to other people, I don't know if they understand it. The Creator and all these spiritual beings gave us all these things and ways to depend on, to rely on for help. So when we need help, and the times we need help, it's just really two things in this world we're seeking. One of them that we refer is *stoowapii*, and *stoowapii* is a big word and if you just talk to a Blackfoot person they will say it just means good luck. No no. It's a concept. Bigger and all-encompassing of success and endeavors and parenting. *Stoowapii*, it's a big word. The flip side of *stoowapii* is *saapoomapii*. *Sappomapii* means all the negative things and evil things, blah blah blah. So *saapoomapii* will involve sickness, death, you know. So when we're going to do or relying on one of these things in our ceremony, for example Sundance, you're either going to do a Sundance to concur an adversary our the *saapoomapii*, whether it's our enemy, whether it's sickness or death, you want to concur our adversary, *saapoomapii*. That is why you are putting up the Sundance. So all the prayers will quickly flip and focus on concurring the adversary. Now if

you're having a Sundance so you could *kehkoostoowapii*, *kehkoestoowapiss*, meaning to be successful, be a somebody, but you want good things. You want *stoowapii*, good fortune, the ability to successes in your endeavours, that's why you are putting up the Sundance. So all the prayers will be flipped over to and focused on *stoowapii*. So not only that will happen with Sundance but everything. Anything you choose, it's just your responsibility to let's say, suppose you want to concur illness. You have this whole broad spectrum of Blackfoot ways that are there for you to help you. And we prefer to do that. Yeah part of what you want to do is, *apataksp*, meaning you are jumping, you're trying to duck and dive this sickness that is coming to you. So one of your responsibilities is to try one of these ways. Part of your responsibilities is not to sit there and say hit me, no. One of your responsibilities is to duck and dive and use one of these sources to concur your adversary. So you did it, and maybe you put up a big smoke ceremony, and nothing works, then you put up another thing. You have tried every way to concur. Then that's destiny, you have to accept destiny. But it is your reasonability to try anyway, you just don't give up.

AG: Is that what *iikakiimaat* means?

AP: Yes and the other term for in making a Vow in doing one of these things is...

01:27:11 ...meaning you're going to make a Vow to do one of these things. So you're trying to alter destiny, whether it's evil or whether it's good. When you can't altar destiny, then you accept destiny. That's the end, It's reverse engineering [laughter]

AG: That is tough for a lot of people?

AP: Well I think if people thoroughly understand that, then you have people who are not going to be upset this work, this praying is garbage. No, no, you have to understand the philosophy behind it, not everything is going to work out, you're going to win and lose some. That's part of learning life.

AG: I have heard comments, you know being one of the few, especially in my generation and in my family to try and learn these things and follow this different path, not the church like everybody else did and follow a different, our natural way, our organic way. I've had comments from relatives, uncles, aunts, mostly uncles that really denounce

AP: Oh yeah, yes.

AG: Our ways. I understand that, the brainwashing

AP: Yeah it comes from that, yeah yeah.

AG: The instant gratification they want. And I think it is really an important thing, that we, we don't have conversations anymore about these things. That's usually all it takes, is to have some conversation. Because that whole acceptance piece that

prayer is not a passive process, it's not a one way healing, it's reciprocal, that's what I understand

AP: Yeah yeah.

AG: That we have parts to play as well.

AP: Yeah.

AG: I think it's a good point.

AP: I got to fill in the blanks now.

AG: I think there is a lot more to this than

AP: Your four questions? [laughing]

AG: Yeah I wanted to keep it around this area.

AP: Like I said you can pull from these things.

AG: Oh yeah! Like the prayer, Like I said, if I had a prayer written down and translated, for those of us who don't speak Blackfoot, or even if you did know Blackfoot, you can take it and see certain things that arise that are really important. I would like to see how does that shape our identity, but you have shown me that. You have talked about stages of life and specific gender, the male and I am glad you did, because I will be talking with some females about this and different aspects. I knew it would be in-depth and I think it's much more than the prayer shaping our identity. It is an entire life.

AP: Yes exactly.

AG: You have proven that it's an entire holistic process, it's not segregated by any means.

AP: A part of my biggest healing, I went to talk at the Treaty 7 conference on existing in both worlds. I don't know who the hell threw my name in, but anyway, I basically said what really helped me heal as a person, was as an adolescent to start learning and really thoroughly understanding our ways, that was all self healing to me. If I don't go through that process I probably wouldn't be alive, I would have succumbed to drugs or alcohol, a real bad life style.

AG: Did you see a pivotal point?

AP: I think that pivotal point to me was when I was in college, I was suddenly, like I was this basketball star and I was just like a God hey. I was wondering is this my life for me? I did leave home once in '69, after I graduated from high school, I was just turning 17. I went to Los Angeles. This lawyer, Philippine lawyer, I used

to guide for him, anyway he said “Allan when you graduate come down and work for me, just for a while, you need to see what this world is about.” He knew how backward we are. Growing up in the 60s there was hardly any power, well almost no power on the reserve. There was still no running water, most of the roads on the reserve didn’t exist and we had real limited communication with the outside world. So we were pretty backward. Anyway, when I went down there I suddenly realized what this world was about and that if I didn’t take care of myself no one was going to take care of me. So I had to take care of myself. I felt a real loneliness for our community. I didn’t hear Blackfoot spoken. And it was like that same experience I had when I was left at four years of age at the boarding school. All of a sudden, I knew I couldn’t see my parents, my grandparents. So that loneliness, that’s what I had experienced. So when I was at the college and knowing I was going to be really successful, in this integrated lifestyle, I thought well what about my relatives, what about my people, who am I going to become, do I become this white man? And at that point I was thinking I have to spend more time speaking Blackfoot and if I am going to take crap, I am going to take it from my own people. So I rolled up my sleeves and started spending more time with the people on the reserve. And made sure my decision with women, wasn’t going to be with white women but with our kind. So that is what made me change my perspective. I knew I couldn’t function without my community, my people, my relatives. It wouldn’t matter how successful I was out there. The same saying goes with Molly Kicking Woman, this elder from Browning, she’s passed away now. In the late 80s, she was talking to these doctors saying, “yeah you white folks came here with your white religion, your heaven and your hell, when die I don’t want to go to heaven with all you white folks, I want to go to the great sand hills with my relatives, that’s where I want to be.” I thought that is so, so, true because to me when it is all said and done, we have a system of prayers, *poomahksin*, that teaches you nothing but love....

1:20:44 ... meaning in this process I have to learn my responsibilities as a grandfather, meaning I have to learn my responsibility as a parent, as a child, knowing those roles and taking a complete stranger as my brother and sister. That’s all our ways, teaching love. The Christians will say, the bible says love is God and God is love. That’s what our ways are teaching. Everything is to love one another, *akiimotsiohp*, and taking care of your relatives, to care and share. It’s all about this piece of mind, that gives us this tranquility, like when we meditate or when we pray, it gives you this spiritual uplifting, this peace. Well you know have reached and succeeded in calling upon those positive things. So you could almost say our ways basically shows us that our ultimate destiny in life is to become a loving human being. Because at the end of the day we always pray for a 100 years, for old age, *Napiosiin*. Our philosophy in Blackfoot philosophy, is if you’ve reach a long life, a 100 years of age, you have lived a good life and Creator has blessed you with a long life to become a teacher or a person of 100 years. A long time ago you just didn’t reach 100 years because of battles or whatever, however we survived. So *Napiosin*, to reach old age is a gift from the Creator and that’s why we have so much regard to the elders, the older people, because they were gifted. So going back to our understanding, when a person

says, when you do a good deed for an elder, especially an elders who are gifted with...

1:23:59 ...they're gifted to have prayer, maybe not only necessary to have *poomahksin*, but they are gifted with power. You may do this person a good deed, maybe you have them tea, and they will turn around and say thank you...\_

1:24:30 ...meaning you're going to be an old lady. She just gave that to you, that is how they would thank you, giving you old age. Sometimes a white person, someone like Madonna or Rihanna they wouldn't want to be an old lady, because they will lose everything, once they start sagging [laughter]. But that's how we think, we almost look forward to reaching old age.

AG: One of my friends wants to jump over all these decades of hardship and be an elder, she's so tired [laughter]...

AP: Trial and error

AG: When you said about the love and peace it's a theme I have heard

AP: In our ceremonies we re-create the origin stories. I will take you back to, well I will tell you personally, you can decipher this. When I started the ceremony I sang a song for the food. I sang the pemmican, I am saying Old Man Sun, you told me if I eat pemmican, I will live a long life and we will have that ability to live long lives. Meaning, then I say, Old Lady Moon you said if I eat the pemmican you would give me a long life. Morning Star you said if I eat pemmican I will live a long life, meaning long happy lives, so that's why we reinforce that, in the song. Then nowadays they say lean, mean, natural processed foods are the best, healthiest foods. So even with the berry at the end of ceremony, the Saskatoon berry, I say the same thing. Meaning the Sun said if you eat this Saskatoon berry it will give me a long life, then I say Moon you said if I eat a this berry you will give me a long life. Morning Star you said if I eat this berry, you will give me a long life. Now with these berries, blue berries all these antioxidants, yeah so that's one little thing. When I started with the main ceremony, I start with the incense song. When Scarface was looking to remove his scar, all the medicine men, the holy, the animals, finally he is referred to Raven, the wisest of the Blackfoot beings. Scarface said I'm told that the only way I can get cured is the Sun is the only one who can cure me, I'm looking for his lodge, where can I find him. The raven said you keep going west, you're going to come to this big vast water. You wait there and you will see this path and then this path will take you to the sun's home, the ocean hey. So the Sun is setting the reflection, like a path. All of sudden these swans came and said we understand you're looking for the path to the sun's home, to make a long story short. These are the stories you have to know. Anyway, he gets healed in this sweat lodge, this is where sweat lodges were given to the Blackfoot people, is from Scarface. So Scarface goes in four sweat lodges and the fourth one the Sun sings this incense song and wipes that scar off with an eagle feather. Then he switches seats with Morning Star,

Mistaken Morning, they switch seats and open the flaps up and they tells him ok which one is your son? And she points to Scarface, uhh wrong! He was an identical twin to Morning Star. So that's why we refer to him as Mistaken Morning Star. Anyway, when we're seeking help from the positive forces in this Blackfoot cosmology, we're seeking the Sun, that's the song we use to remind the Creator we are seeking help. Hears the incense song, this song you use to heal, we want this healing, we want this power. I am reminding them in re-creating that song. And I keep going. I will just kind of jump around and the only time I can teach you more is if you become a bundle owner. I sing this song when the Beaver Bundle was given to man, the first Beaver Bundle, the pipe. He didn't really like it because this beaver, Chief Beaver eloped with his wife and he didn't like it. His wife came back and to make up for that the Chief Beaver gave him his pipe. So the beaver well if he doesn't like then I will call upon my friends, all the animals, they will contribute their power and their songs to this Beaver Bundle, their dance, they will put their power into this bundle. So he invited all the animals and they came and contributed all their songs and their power. Still the man was not very happy. Then the Beaver said well okay, I will call on my buddy the Sun and his wife and Morning Star. So when I am going like this, it is the sign language for Old Man, the Sun. So he comes in and he sat down and there he is, there he is, is what I am singing. Then the moon, the Old Lady, she's coming and she sat down, there she is, there she is. Where I sat in that ceremony is where is where the Sun sat in that original Beaver Ceremony and where that other lady sat, next to the bundle, that is where the Moon sat. Where the one that is cutting tobacco, that is Morning Star. I am saying there they are, there they are. So when the man knew the big guys, the big guns were behind it he accepted it, the pipe. He knew he had something, you know, meaningful. That is how the Blackfoot Beaver Bundles came into existence. So we recreate those dances and the powers that were given to them to help us. You know like the buffalos are so important to our existence so we use the Buffalo Rocks to dance, to continue, so we have continued success in our lives, our endeavours. We use the dog dance because the dogs back then used to help us chase the buffalo. Then the last dance is the buffalo dance so that the buffalos are replenished.

AG: What do you think about our buffalos today? Do we have this missing link?

AP: Well the buffalo, although we still do the ceremonies and pray, I think in my prayers I am basically asking for survival. Now that can be replaced by, instead of buffalos we have people with a bunch of degrees and a bunch of certificates and skilled trades. So we can be providers and we can acquire and we can survive this world. The substitute of the beef tongue with the buffalo tongue. So we are substituting that with successful lives, rather than literally go hunt a buffalo. So it's being supplemented, I mean substituted. It's a symbol now. The buffalo just represent life and it was everything. So everything we need to today, the Buffalo can represent that.

- AG: My second question was if there is instructional value for living. I think, we kind of touched on that. This question may be different it may not be what does prayer speak about wellbeing? It might be the same as the instructional value.
- AP: It's one in the same. It's almost like a redundant question I think.
- AG: So my last question is more for counseling, I'm having such a change now, but I will ask it anyway, then you could do the prayer. How can understanding Blackfoot spirituality help counselor serve our native clients more effectively?
- AP: Well I think you got to serve as a broker. I think you have to understand that maybe this person hasn't succeed so well in life. It will be different supposing this person may have succeeded, you will find different successes, different levels of successes, let's say an integrated Indian. This person may have been degreed, still yet the person is going through some tribulations. So you find out, you go to the presenting problems, maybe this person is not living a stable lifestyle, maybe has a degree and a job but a functioning alcoholic. So you got to deal with the presenting problem. So you try and deal with that presenting problem. It's the underlying problems that us First Nations have that create a lot of problems for us. So most of the underlying problems you maybe well aware of, from dysfunctional families from the plight of boarding school or racism all the stuff, the whole nine yards. So you as a counselor, I think it's a cooperative approach you may have to use, you can't use a clinical approach or direct counseling where you say you have to do, or indirect where you sit there and take notes. You have to take a cooperative approach that's just basically an Indian approach.
- AG: So it's almost like social work.
- AP: Yeah, so you case plan. You've got to develop a case plan and part of that case plan is they got to seek proper first nations, you know fulfill that vacuum, in order for them to function.
- AG: What would you name that?
- AP: I would say sensitivity training, awareness, identity search, I don't know. There might be a better term for that. But I think what they need to do is they pay homage to their Indianness. They have been a white guy too damn long, wondering why they have brown skin...What is so important for them, for you as a counselor, is that they have to understand that they are not alone with their problems, people from all walks of life have problems in with their lives. I think what is so important for them to understand is they are human problems. They're not an Indian problem. Maybe it's disproportionate in numbers and figures and stats because they're Indian. But it's still a human problem. They cannot continue to bash themselves because they are Indian. That starts to heal their Indianness. So I think you as the first contact, you have to become a little more knowledge in your Indian ways so you can become more sensitive to their needs in that regard



so you can maybe guide them a little bit and give them a background. It's almost like getting them ready for their referral.

AG: That is a huge statement about human problems not Indian problems. I have been guilty of it. Pathologizing us as Indians.

AP: I make this statement because I'm not an academic, I am a pragmatic. I worked as a probation officer for seventeen years and I did a lot of casework, administration, I was a casework supervisor. So we have dealt with a lot of our problems. That is the reason why I speak like is because some of the conclusions of my own findings. I had to work with other social people in that field. From policing, to social services, to child welfare, those kind of people. And talking to those kind of people who had to get sent to get a forensic assessment done by some psychologist. I have talked to all those people. I didn't pull it out of the air, this is solid stuff, substance. So a lot of our people would be in trouble with the law because they don't have a value, if you have a system of values whether they are integrated values or traditional values you will do things accordingly. Not that these people are perfect, but when you don't have a good understanding about integrated values or traditional values, you're almost living a valueless lifestyle. No real spirituality and no real guidance. A value is what you treasure, something you hold of high value, if you value your children you're not going to do something stupid that is harmful to your children, you value them. A lot of our people may not have those proper values intact, and if they had, they wouldn't be doing some of the stupid things, they were doing to get themselves in trouble with the law. If you have self esteem, if you care for yourself as an individual, as to who you are and what you are, you have self esteem, you have confidence. When you have self confidence then you can be and do anything you want to be in this world, because you have confidence. And when you care for yourself, you're not going to do something harmful or stupid to yourself because you care for yourself you know. If you care for yourself than you can care for others, what is care? It's love and what is love? *Atsimoiskaan*, prayers and spirituality. So I think that too many of our people nowadays have intellectualized themselves from spirituality, took maybe a scientific perspective too much. But, yet science and this mainstream world, how I view it, is not succeeding, not doing a bang up job. Even with the education system, supposedly we're more educated and knowledgeable and sophisticated than ever, yet we're having more or the same problems that have existed for eons. Everyone that wants to jump on this band wagon on mainstream and you look at some of these countries that are fighting for their identity, because they know damn well that once they succumb to the man, westernization, globalization, they know it's going to tear away their identity.

AG: Their essence.

AP: Yeah, their essence. There are some people who have succeeded with that and one of them I would say is basically, the Japanese people. They have been able to balance both worlds; to a certain degree, they are just as bad. I think there is other cultures, other people out there, that have learned to balance things. I think we as

Indian people have to come to grips as Indian people. And if they thoroughly understand our ways they're going to find like they've come home, like coming home to mama again and getting that big hug, because that's what our ways are about because it fills that void, that lack of love, that lack of not caring. So I think what I say really makes sense for our Indian people, it may not make sense to the white people, because white people say ah it's corny, it looks good but, but it makes sense to our people. Because they are going to find themselves.

- AG: I see so many empty vessels out there, the schools and the students. They are just so empty and searching and it's so pitiful.
- AP: Yeah and I think for the most part our whole community doesn't understand that. It's like a person who is sick and doesn't know what is bothering him. So they don't do anything about it. You know a proper diagnosis is 50% of the cure. So if our own people, leadership to whoever, to parents to the children, if they knew what they were facing, if they knew their sickness, or their disease, they would do something about it. I think because we sadly lost a lot of people skills, generation after generation of boarding schools, we don't have people skills anymore and part of the people skills we've lost is like effective communication, not only that but problem solving. We don't know how to problem solve. We come to a problem, we just sit there. You know like those windup toys, with battery operated vehicles, once they hit the wall...that's what we do with our problems, we just don't know what to do with our problems because we don't know how to problem solve. So I think a lot of our counseling has to fulfill that void of people losing their people skills and a lot of people say it's life-skills, but nooo, I would sooner refer to it as people skills. We have some many stories in our spirituality about people who became spirits and people who have come back to this world to become human and human beings who were able to shape shift. So think this day and age we have to recognize the importance of becoming human again.
- AG: I think that a lot of people do, they really recognize it, and when you look at our evolution, we, of course pre-colonization, and we had the Indian agent and then we had the ability and leave without a pass. There is only a few decades of actual control of our own lives and I think people get it. They understand we are sick and we do need healing. But, you are right in this simple practical manner how? And that does really come with those people skills, very practical and my mom used to say...
- AP: I had a few good talks with your mom about this kind of...
- AG: She would talk about her frustration with being spoon fed as people it takes away from our
- AP: Responsibility and independency.
- AG: And to solve our own problems.

- AP: Well especially with the people she dealt with who wouldn't and couldn't understand that. So how do we help them make them understand that? How do we change that, is the million dollar question.
- AG: I think it is a process of awareness is a big part of that.
- AP: If you can get them to buy in that they need to know who they are.
- AG: You have mentioned it before, you said you could only see the beauty of all of who we are when you went away. That is a really big thing that people go through, your were able to leave and see the rest of the world and what is out there. A lot of our people don't, they get to Lethbridge or Calgary, but they don't get to see something so much bigger.
- AP: In 1969, Canada didn't even know what marijuana was and I was seventeen in Los Angeles. I had seen bottle water being sold for the first time and I couldn't stop laughing. It was so stupid for me to see that because at the time you could still go to the Oldman River and take you know a big drink of water and I thought it was so stupid and I couldn't stop laughing and I was thinking, what are they going to do that with our air one of these days. And I am not going to laugh because we might end up having to pay for the air.
- AG: Well the wind mills, we are selling it down south.
- AP: Well yeah! Those are the things I seen and I seen how that world was so cruel, cold, couldn't care less. This one coloured guy was dying, my first experience, I had never seen that. This one guy was dying in the hospital in his eighties and I literally argued with the nurses and doctors, this guy is dying how come you are not taking care of him! He doesn't have insurance and I didn't understand at that time the States had health issues, no they were just going to leave him there to die, but because I argued with them finally this doctor said I will take care of him. I think he just needed something, he was diabetic and he just needed something to keep him going or whatever. That's where I realized...I met some outside Indians and I was thinking, shit we're way better than guys.
- AG: Spoken like a real Blackfoot. [laughter]
- AP: I started to realize that I needed to appreciate my community more because back then there was still a closeness to our community, and that is what impacted me so much because I experienced that closeness. I was talking to you about how we lost our people skills. Well we had a oral culture and I was telling you about our oral culture, how we lost that because of the lifestyle we are living. That oral culture really fostered relationship building and caring for one another and developing love and relationship building. So we needed that relationship building to do our communal hunts to survive as a people. So it really made us dialogue and interact with one another more. Now we live like how we live in the city like in an apartment, you don't care and you're doing your own thing, we're doing the same thing on the reserve now. The community has got to realize that

those challenges as we face as we move, because now even though we can't fulfill that identity, like that buffalo tongue is not there anymore, it's a beef tongue, so they've got to start finding out, ok so I am an Indian now. What are the challenges as we move forward? Part of the challenge is no longer act like Indians. The community doesn't foster surviving as a people. We went to non-interference, minding your own business, living like white people and thinking like white people. So even though we try and do something individually, the community, we're not preparing the community how it is changing. Even though we tell them all these good things, give them spirituality, they are going back into this rat race and yet what we need to do is prepare them better, because things are changing

AG: So prepare them to face what's going on or prepare them to be more collective?

AP: Well I would like to say we could do that, to be more collective, to be more socializing and to become a community as we were, I'd like to do that, but I think everyone is designed to think and act that we want to be like these white people, there is nothing in place.

AG: There is definitely...

AG: Our leaders don't see that.

AP: Yea I know cause they are doing it by not being at home and that was Chief Clarence Louis I am going to be a Chief that stays home.

AG: Well Chief Louie was lucky he had a bunch of poodles to deal with. Here we got a bunch of Dobermans and German Sheppard. Lock him up in a room with...and see who comes out. Clarence Louie, great yes, but he cannot make a statement for everyone because he was at an opportune time, dealing with people who were of no resistance on what they were going to say or do. Nothing is stopping him. Five hundred people and they couldn't care less what he was going to do, there was no challenges. Here, let's say we try to implement this thing and get the community behind us? It will get ragged on and people are going to spit on us and despise us because I have been through it, been there, done it. I think deliberately in my life, three times I have really tried to help our people make, alter our destiny, and the three times I tried, I thought the third time would be the charm, but people don't want to change. It seems like there is force out there that has a lock hold of negativeness and they don't want people to make the changes.

AG: Have you worked with the young people?

AP: I have worked with young offenders.

AG: Did you try do this in the community? Did you target the young people or was it more like adult population?

AP: Well I tried to when I came back from Los Angeles. All of sudden there was big talk if we had facilities, we could save our children. The mean time I was going to

the college and at the college at that time to get paid \$250 a month was like getting like \$4000 a month. So, anyway I gotta be smarter than that so I applied for this recreation grant and I was paying myself \$600 a month for these four months, I was living like a king. Part of it was to do a recreation survey and to do a needs assessment for facilities. That is why the complex, when they strived to get the complex, they said does your community need it? They said, oh yeah Allan Pard did that survey and then boom we got the recreation facility and what not, and at that time I just happened to find out there was a culture education grant, so I started the culture center. The history, there is no parts in books about Peigans, so I got the grant that book written about the winter count. Those are the things I did in the 70s and realized nobody was going to do anything and I thought if we don't get a Sundance done then the next couple of year we are toast as people. So I applied to get this grant, at that time no one applied for a grant. I went to see Joe Crow Shoe and I said I want to get a Sundance going and I said do we have the right people who can still put up a Sundance? He said oh yes and I said well who are they? He said old lady Many Guns and Mike Swims Under is the last one that can run these Sundances. I said well how come they are not being done? He didn't want to say it but I put two and two together, and the cost of these ceremonies were big costs and these people were no longer making an incomes. So anyway, well I will do a grant and as long as there is a spiritual reason to do it and I told Joe what if money wasn't the issue? He said yeah my daughter had a dream I was supposed to put up a Sundance. I said, well let's go. Uh I sold my Sundance bundle to the museum. Yeah he said that, and I said what. He said yeah I sold it to the museum. I said what? Well everyone was trying to be white man and everyone was selling their bundles so John Yellow Horn told him come on just sell your bundle we don't need them anymore. So he sold it and I said what the hell I told him can we have it? He said no we need that Sundance bundle to have a Sundance. Can you go see if you can go and get it? So I went and met with the Minister of Culture at the time. The Minister at that time was Horace Smight, Minister of Culture, and I met with him and told him we wanted the Sundance otherwise were going to lose our identity.... And he said yeah, yeah, yeah, tell me another one. So I met with him again and I brought Joe with me, I told him there's the man that wants a Sundance and said told him you know those bundles were acquired really shady, they were really shady dealings on how you guys acquired those stuff. Well the minute I started talking like that and then I said how would you like it if I raising a ruckus, we're supposed to be free to practice our spirituality and our religion and you're trying to deny me to practice my religion by not giving us that bundle. I said you have no business holding onto that bundle and we started talking a little bit in an activist way, suddenly he switched his tone. And Joe said, well how about I bring my Thunder Medicine Pipe Bundle and I will leave it here and I will take the Sundance Bundle? Yeah, yeah, so those loans were started. So in 1977, we had our first Sundance that the Peigans had, never had one since the Second World War. And the Bloods never had a Sundance too. *Siksika* their last Sundance was in 1964. Browning never had a Sundance. So we go see Mike Swims Under, he was the last Beaver Man and the last Sundance Man. He knows the ceremonies inside out...the Bloods said ah

there's nobody else that knows it. Meanwhile in Heart Butte, Montana, we have some real diehards there that are extremely traditionalist, by far more traditional than anybody I know. Because he was a cousin of mine, my grandmother's cousin, I was able to get a lot of things going with him. If it wasn't for that man, we would have lost big time. After that Sundance in 1977, it was all done by us young people and in order for us to get that Sundance going, Joe said well I need the Brave Dog Society revived. I say all right will do it! So I get Jerry and all of my friends; come on, we've got to get this Sundance, this Brave Dog Society going again! So we did. So we were able to help put up the Sundance. Meanwhile, other people Browning, Bloods, *Siksika* had come down to this Sundance. It was a really nice Sundance. I thought the whole Blackfoot confederacy was going to camp there, little did I know how pitiful we were, but anyway we had this great nice Sundance, it was all paid for. Suddenly Browning two years later said we have to have a Sundance again and the Sundance happened in Browning. In 1982, all of sudden the Horns, who have never transferred for like 13 years, all of sudden say we better transfer to new people. So there was this ripple effect that started happening. So I'm going to take credit for it. [laughter]

AG: Absolutely!

AP: The Horns transferred, it took them a few years later to understand the importance of Sundance to them they think the circle camp is the Sundance. They refer to it as *akookahksin*. They call it a Sundance, but really it's just a Horn Ceremony and the Buffalo Women's Society ceremony. Later on they realized we need to have a Sundance. So the Sundances started happening there too. Then *Siksika*, in the 1990s, they were probably the most extreme Christianized, not assimilated, but really extremely Christianized. My daughter put up a Sundance up there in 1999. They never had a Sundance, the last one was in 1964. So my contributions to youth were directly, either involved indirectly, either through recreation to try do something with their lives. Then after that stint, basically well, because I was so successful as a basketball player, they built that community hall. Faron Strikes With A Gun came and said, Allan, I'm on council now, what do you guys need? And I said well we need an Olympic-sized floor for Basketball court. So the community hall was built. So we seem to progress then we suddenly hit these challenges and then we seem to regress and go back. So finally after the Sundance in Brocket in 1977, people started saying, Allan Pard, all he does is give money to his relatives, these sort of things. So I said, ah I don't need this anymore, so I thought well you guys can run it. I went and got the job with probation and started working off the reserve because I didn't want to put up with the bickering anymore. Time went by then in 1997, 1998, 1997, I decided, well I didn't decide, my uncle Billy Strikes With A Gun approached me and said to me how come you're not running for Council? How come you're not running for Chief? I don't want to be Chief? So how come you're not running for Council? I said well you know how the people are. He said well, it's just like looking at a drowning man and you can't just watch, you have to help out. So I said okay, okay; so I ran and got on Council and I realized that we need to make some changes and change the status quo thinking. Finally realized that the water rights thing had such a, kept us

as hostage as a people. Any extra money we had would go to these lawyers meanwhile we were accumulating this huge deficit that was going to bankrupt the reserve and go into third party. Celeste was on Council at the time and I said you know we have no alternative but forget about that lawsuit and try negotiate an out of court settlement. Part of the negotiation you know the outcome of your negotiation, in a court case, you don't know what is going to happen. So I said why don't we just sign a protocol agreement with the province saying we will work with them. That signed. It was a big chaos and there was big problems with that. So I left and had a heart attack in 1998 so I didn't run. It was around his time of the year, and I was in Calgary at the Foothills, I had a blood clot. So my uncle comes up and he said nominations are coming up let me go there and represent you. They just chased my uncle out of there. Anyway I thought it must be the will of the Creator, so I didn't bother pursuing it. So when I got out in the meantime Chief and Council at the time, got that handshake deal with the out of court settlement. I was still at home because I couldn't work at the time, this was 2001 and I was approached by Chief and Council to see if I could work for them. Willy and I to work for them, I knew I could work with Willy and I told Willy that we going to be set up to be scapegoats for this whole dam thing. I said so watch yourself, all we can do is advise them, we're not decision makers, but we can advise them. So we tried to do a lot of damage control but Chief and Council most of the time wouldn't listen. So anyway finally I worked as the CEO and then realized that we're going to have this huge settlement and we need to protect Chief and Council from themselves and our people. I did a finance code for the people, did this whole thing on Nation building. Met with Dr. Steven Carnell from the Harvard project and talked to Dr. Steven Carnell because they did a study on the most successful tribes in North America and all these commonologies came out. So I sat down with him and said come up to *Piikani* and let's do some Nation building here. So I got him to do a presentation to Chief and Council, like they understood it, basically what his premise is, like your mom was saying, you can't always be dependent on the government. As a Nation of people, we can't always be dependent on Indian Affairs or government to fix our problems. If we're ever going to change and make great strides as a nation of people we have to take on our own responsibility and become self determined and self sufficient.

AG: Sovereign.

AP: Yes. Basically, well yeah let's try sell this concept to the people. Whew, the people didn't want that. You're just letting the government off the hook, all the people who thrive off of chaos and disorganization, they didn't want change. So that was my last stab, but before I left I made this declaration called *Piikaniisinii*. That declaration was to identify ourselves that we are Peigan and anytime were going to make major decisions or do anything in our line of business we will at least consider our *Peiganness* first. So we can incorporate our values that we need to in any major changes or major undertakings with our people. That we will use our *Peiganness*. That is what that decoration is all about and that was it. Then Chief and Council, basically when I made my presentation on everything and I left, some of the Councillors were telling me, yeah when you walked out they did

this [Allan makes a gesture with his hand.] They said Allan Pard is going to tie our hands, we aren't going to be to nothing, as a Council. So, a lot of that stuff...

AG: What did they mean?

AG: Well be restricted, you're like in jail, restricted.

AG: So would you ever consider going back?

AG: No. They burnt me like big time. My family always tells me not to doing anything, they tell me you did your tour of duty. Let the other people out there do it.

AG: So was there just one Sundance?

AG: We had Sundances since...okay and it's been kind of moving, like there are different people. But, some of these people I would say, are not bigger picture thinkers, they are like micro manager thinkers. So they just as long as it's in front of them, they will just walk in front of it. I don't know, since I went boarding school and knew what boarding school was like, it was like someone switched the light on for me to see the bigger picture first before I see the smaller details. I always had seen this macro perspective of things before I see the details.

AG: Do you believe that our instability with our Sundance has an effect on our political body and our progression?

AP: Yeah, so when I was back then at the Nation building thing, part of the concept was to have a stable government and transparency, good governance. One of the keys was to have a competent bureaucracy, to have business ventures always from Chief and Council, successful endeavours in that regard. For stable government I pushed to have, I went out and got money to do a survey to see if people wanted to go from a two-year system to a four-year system, so we did a random survey. We didn't have the time or capacity to do the whole reserve. So 200 people, go out there and randomly survey 200 people, don't just have men, mix it up. Anyway the survey came back and 99% of the people wanted change. They wanted to go to a four-year system so I reported that to Chief and Council, Chief and Council they want a four-year system. Okay, all right make the changes, so they changed the bylaws for the election bylaw and the people approved it and away it went. Then I told them this thing about names, and I told them you know I said Peigan is not our proper name. Maybe that is why were in such a mess, we should change our name into our proper name, let's call it *Piikani*. They said, yeah yeah, it makes sense we should do it. I said Peigan was David Thomason's crude attempt to write *Piikani*, why we are still using Peigan? If you break Peigan, it's his attempt to try write *Piikani*. So, anyway, yeah that was the things have done.

AG: That is incredible



- AP: No one person has come up to me to say, geez thank you. I am not kidding. In fact people have despised me more, people have always despised me from way back because I didn't drink because I made up my mind way back that I wasn't going to drink and do drugs. People think I was spoon-fed or rich. No, I am rich because I don't spend my money foolishly I was able to save money.
- AG: Well, I will tell you one thing amongst the academic community, amongst a lot of elders I have talked to, there has always been you have been the main *Piikani* person they refer to in a really good way. So it's always hard to hear like, there was this Einstein quote "great minds will always have violent opposition" and that is very true in your case.
- AP: I will also use a quote from Einstein "imagination is previews of life's coming attraction" I just changed it to dreams.
- AG: Seeing how helpless I feel as a *Piikani* person with who is in Council, with what I know from a wellness perspective, and what I know spiritually, it only makes sense to be authentically who we are meaning spiritually.
- AP: I am such a threat to the chaos people I am real threat yes.
- AP: And, they don't like to see it, and so like I am so controversial if I ran. As long as I am not doing anything I am okay, but if I ran for Chief this election they would be shooting. Literally shooting.
- AG: I think you would have a lot of support
- AP: I would do it if people banged on my doors, but nobody has. So I think to myself well people don't see me and if people don't see me then how are they going to support me? Where is that support? There is a few times, and I am not one to go out and ask for support, and I never would, because of our protocols. The only reason I ran for Council back then my uncle made me run.
- AG: I will bang on your door. [laughter] I would totally support you as a Chief and you would have your son is in school, you have new generation of *Piikani* people in Calgary, Lethbridge and away who come back to vote.
- AP: The brain drain.
- AG: But, who want to see and who know and healthy from unhealthy. I mean you would have, Oh would totally put a team together for you
- AP: Well I know that is how my friend Charlie Weasel Head got on is because he had some young people who did the campaigning for him and did the door knocking for him. You know Charlie and I grew up together and the reason why I know Charlie is because his grandfather was a medicine man, Pat Weasel Head. So I knew Pat from ceremonies, but I knew that family, they kind of took me and kind of adopted me over in the Bloods, like a brother...On this reserve nobody has

signaled out their leader, nobody has singled their go to guy, and I think most of time they don't see me as that potential guy because they see me as a tied up on weekends at ceremonies, I am too tied up in my job and I am too tied up with my family plus my personal endeavours such as horse racing.

AP: Part of our spirituality is so important to be note to not to be pessimistic and not to be negative, not to think negative. Our people really believe, they say *piinaa sapomiiksinst* don't think negative, *piina sapoomiip*, don't talk negative, especially bundle keepers. If you're around bundles, they really encourage that. We can't even talk about, say the word *death* in front of those bundles because what we're doing is were encouraging it and it's like a ripple that rings out. So what does it do? Bring on the negative things. So that's why we are so careful to continue to be positive. As soon as we can, we try and purify ourselves quickly as you can because we don't want that clinging. So we don't want it to impact our loved ones around us. That thing is like a black cloud hanging around. So we have to have a positive attitude and think positive too, with our lives and if we want good things to happen in this world, we have to maintain positive thinking. So to have this piece of mind, one of the things we aspire in our lives is to have that contentment, that peace. We can't be doing things out of the worse negative emotions, like fear. Well I better do this because I am scared. Every time you think back in all your major decisions, when your pissed off in anger and made a decision, you sometimes regret those decisions you made you when you have done them with these negative emotions. Guilt is one of the worst things you know. Religions are based on guilt.

AG: Fear.

AP: Yes, fear.

AG: It brings up something.... he often would bring it up, and I don't know where he gets this but he would bring up 'I don't mess with that Indian stuff because it will, bad things can happen or people get hurt' and all that. And I get that, from what you have all said, where he might have got it, might have thought of that. But I also find that very influenced from Christianity, the cursing, like it's a punishing God. Whereas this is a different concept, it isn't about God, an eye in the sky watching. It's a mechanism of self-controlling mechanism. But, it also, I think a lot of our Blackfoot people really do believe in it because I hear it a lot of people saying well don't mess with those things, it can hurt you.

AP: Yeah, well think a lot of it has to do with misunderstanding. Misunderstanding and plus the influences of Christianity, the fear mongering and what not. So a lot of times, I don't take what people have to say, especially people that have never walked a mile. I think I would think about it more if somebody was really involved and said those kind of things. I mean there are some things, some negative things, it is divine justice, that we have, that happens in our ways. But most of it is self-inflicted. You are what you think and we have known that. It's like I was saying, all you have to do is continue to surround and call upon the

positive things in this world so things can be positive and that's all we want. The Blackfoot people just want to live happily ever after you know. We have all these gifts that were given to us to do so you know.

AG: So people know this, do you find that there is that human side of us that kind of wants to be that victim, that kind of wants to indulge in self pity?

AP: Yeah, well, we don't want to let go! It's because of that negative environment we have created on the reserve. The reserve system has created this whole negative thing and we just don't want to let go of negative feelings. We don't even want to look, it's just like say supposing, somebody will say ah I got into this car accident, why should I believe in our ways, or do this and I was telling him I think if it wasn't for your ways you wouldn't be walking here or things could have been a lot worse. They don't see the silver lining in the cloud or the positive. They always see the negative. Things will happen in this world

AG: That's the law of nature.

AP: Yes, the law of nature. The same things for us people, things are not going to always turn accordingly. It's our responsibility to try

AG: That is our responsibility to try.

AP: Yes, your responsibility.

AG: The psychologists call it learned helplessness, the cycle of keep buying into it. And I see a lot of our kids doing that. I see them saying well I heard one, a couple weeks ago, a little grade four say I am always going to be poor, I am dumb, I can't learn. I was so hurt, I was so sad and I had to take some time to really rebuild him up and let him see his control in his life, but he is not always going to get that in life. But he did have that sense of destined for...

AP: A loser.

AG: Yeah! And these are our males.

AP: The easiest thing in counseling, in life is everyone wants to be a winner, nobody wants to be loser. And how do we? And I guess to be a winner? Well we all want to be successful in whatever we do and but that is what I am talking about when I say *stoowapii*, the good stuff, the good things. I think there is not enough people who have a deep understanding of our spirituality. There is too many of our people who have a surface understanding. They don't have no substance to their understanding. And a lot of our people involved in our traditions will not admit it. There is a lot of people who will just make up things and just say things. But to me this is our life, this is our lives, our lifestyle and it is important that people try and understand. It's no, there's a lot of other things I can add to this, but that is really basic. And if people had that understanding they would have more appreciation of themselves, about our ways. They would never condemn

themselves or our ways. We would have this self esteem and self confidence as a people. I call it cultural confidence, restoring cultural confidence

AG: And that's the identity.

AP: That is the identity crisis we're in, restoring cultural confidence.

[End of interview.]

## Appendix E

### Personal Communication Reference List

This appendix lists the various and multiple personal communications were cited in this thesis. It serves as a reference tool and shows the deep level of respect for the role that the listed contributors made to the work embodied herein.

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