

**A Needs Assessment of Aboriginal  
Students at the University of Manitoba**

**by**

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**A Practicum Report**

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**A Needs Assessment of Aboriginal Students at the University of Manitoba**

**BY**

**J. Jonston-Makinuk**

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University**

**of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree**

**of**

**Master of Social Work**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this practicum was to complete a needs assessment of Aboriginal students at the University of Manitoba. It was an opportunity for the Aboriginal students to voice what their needs were through individual interviews and focus groups. The Traditional Medicine Wheel was used as a framework to examine student life.

The practicum addresses the issues of university education for Aboriginal students in the new century. It identifies the needs of students from a distinct Aboriginal perspective; and finally, it provides information about university services for this specific population. It also demonstrates some of the university's strengths and areas that require improvement in providing services for Aboriginal students. The title of this report is "A Needs Assessment of Aboriginal Students at the University of Manitoba."

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## **Forward Aboriginal Identification**

Throughout this document there are various ways of identifying Aboriginal people. In order to clarify the use of the different terms I have provided the following information. I have used the term Aboriginal to identify any student that identified him or herself as Aboriginal. This means Native, Indian, Metis, Treaty Status, Non-Treaty Status, Inuit and Mayan people. Where the students clearly identified themselves as First Nations, Treaty Status or Metis respectfully, I have included that in the document to reflect their comments. In the literature there are various ways of identifying Aboriginal and I have used the identification that the author has chosen to use. However, there are legal terms to define Aboriginal people and this may be found in Chapter Two of *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada* by Frederies (1998). This gives an explanation of how Aboriginal identification was developed historically and the current definitions of Aboriginal people. All of the succeeding statements in this section are quotes by Frederies.

“The indigenous population has undergone name changes that are not universally accepted –either by the indigenous population or the non-indigenous peoples.” (pp.21, Frederies)

“Indian people have been referred to as Aboriginals or Natives. Today, First Nations has been used by a segment of the indigenous population, and generally by Treaty Indians.” (pp.21, Frederies)

### **Registered Indian:**

“The terms legal, registered and status are generally used interchangeably to denote an Indian who is of Federal concern. Registered Indians are defined in a legal manner, as opposed to other types of Indians who lack special legal status. This is in sections 11, 12 and 13 of the 1978 Indian Act. In 1985, Bill C-31 (An Act to Amend the Indian Act) created new legislation that redefined who is and is not Indian.” (pp.25, Frederies)

“The new Act introduced four types of Indian

- 1) status with band membership
- 2) status with no band membership
- 3) non-status but with band membership
- 4) and non-status, non-band.

“As a result, one may hold legal status but not be a member of a band.

Previously, no distinction was made.” (pp.31, Frederies)

### **The definition of Metis is:**

“The Metis are a unique people in Canadian Society. Originally they grew out of the relationship that existed between Aboriginals and the European Immigrants to the New World.” (pp.35, Frederies)

- they are an Aboriginal people distinct from Indian and Inuit.
- descendents of the historic Metis who evolved in what is now Western Canada as a people with a common political will
- descendents of those Aboriginal peoples who have been absorbed by the historic Metis.” (pp.35, Frederies)

"The Metis community comprises members of the above who share a common cultural identity and political will (Metis National Council, 1983). Both government and the association agree that a Metis is someone who declares him/ herself as a Metis, has traditionally held her/himself as Metis, and is accepted by the Metis community as Metis." (pp.38, Frederies)

"In Manitoba, the Federation definition of a Metis remains a racial one that enables non-status Indians to join. Today, there is a distinction between the historical Metis and the Pan-Metis. Pan-Metis is a more inclusive term that includes historic Metis, people of mixed Indian-European ancestry, and non-status Indians. The federal government has taken the position that Metis are a provincial responsibility, even though there are federal departments that provide funding for them e.g., The Secretary of the State." (pp.39, Frederies)

**Inuit:**

"Eskimos are now referred to as Inuit in Canada, while in the U.S.A. they are still referred to as Eskimos.

In 1978, an Inuk was defined as a member of those people known as Inuit, Eskimo, or Inuvialuit who claim traditional use a occupancy of the land. In the case of the 1975 James Bay Agreement, an Inuk was defined as any individual who possesses a disc number, or has one quarter Inuit blood, or is considered an Inuk by the local community, and such other persons as may be agreed upon." (pp.40, Frederies)

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction and Learning Goals**

#### **The Aim of the Practicum:**

The aim of this practicum was to complete a needs assessment of Aboriginal students who were enrolled at the University of Manitoba 1997-1998. This assessment aimed to determine whether the emotional, spiritual, physical and mental supports required to successfully complete an undergraduate degree were present for Aboriginal students while attending the University of Manitoba. The assessment has identified those needs that were fulfilled, and those , which were lacking, so that the Aboriginal Student Center and the University of Manitoba would be able to provide more comprehensive services for this student population.

This assessment incorporated culturally relevant strategies by using the Medicine Wheel (Bartlett, 1995; Bopp, 1984; Freesoul, 1986; Gallegos, 1992; Longclaws 1994; Pepper, 1991; Bruyere, 1996) as a framework for reference, as well as the three phase plan for assessing needs outlined by Belle Ruth Witkin in "Conducting and Planning Needs Assessments" (1995). This assessment was carried out by means of individual interviews and focus groups. In Aboriginal tradition, I used a holistic approach/ worldview in doing this work. I asked the students questions which embodied the emotional, physical, spiritual and physical aspects of their student life.

The intention of this work was to provide a stepping-stone for expressing the needs of Aboriginal students. It is a mechanism by which the Aboriginal

Student Center can focus on the needs of their students. It could also be an instrument to gather information, which the Center can use to plan future programming and services.

**The Educational Benefits to the Student:**

I anticipated that through the process, I would:

- 1) Learn the process of performing a needs assessment.
- 2) Learn how to improve my planning skills in the area of organizational development.
- 3) Learn how grassroots community work can be used to affect change within a department and potentially an organization.
- 4) Learn more about the structure and substance of post-secondary educational issues for Aboriginal students.
- 5) Learn more about different aspects of the Aboriginal community in regards to educational issues.
- 6) Learn about the diverse needs of Aboriginal students.
- 7) Discover the differences between what the contemporary literature states and what the students actually identified as needs related to succeeding in their educational goals.
- 8) Learn more about the Medicine Wheel and Traditional Aboriginal way of doing things.



## **Benefits to the Aboriginal Student Center**

I hope that through this study the Aboriginal Student Center will find information that reflects an account of identified needs of the Aboriginal students they serve. The final analysis of this needs assessment will be a tool to plan future programs and services for the students. Ideally it will be utilized by the Native Student Advisor to identify the areas in which students require support on an individual and/or group basis. The Aboriginal Student Center may use the information to plan and improve programs within the Center based on the students' expressed needs. This information may be shared with the University of Manitoba to plan future Aboriginal programming and to provide support services on a larger scale throughout the university itself.

Specifically, this assessment identified the emotional, mental, physical and spiritual areas where students are requiring support from the staff of the Aboriginal Student Center and the support services of the University of Manitoba. This work identified the strengths of the Aboriginal Student Center so that they may carry on their work and ensure the continuance of current programs, which are effectively providing support for students. It is also a foundation stone for doing future research on Aboriginal student supports from an Aboriginal perspective. Finally, this assessment can assist the Center to be more comprehensive in its programs because planners can be more sensitive to the changing needs of the students.

## **My Perspective as an Aboriginal Student**

I have written this practicum report with the experience of being an Aboriginal student who has attended college and university in Canada. For years I have dealt with various degrading issues such as racism. An example of this is that teachers have told me that I was not intelligent enough to attend university. Rarely have I seen Aboriginal communities acknowledged, and at times I have been instructed to be silent rather than discuss my experiences related to Aboriginal issues in university classes. I found it difficult not to be able to speak about scholarly pursuits and concerns in various educational settings especially related to my family and community. Throughout my experiences I have seen only token respect given to an Aboriginal worldview within educational institutions. There are limited course offerings and very few Aboriginal teachers. Throughout my graduate work, I have had to adjust my courses to reflect my own needs in trying to learn and develop an Aboriginal perspective. The information I collected for research projects often came from Aboriginal libraries and agencies; little information is available in the libraries of the major institutions of education. The information offered in the post-secondary system is often outdated or limited to an anthropological position. An anthropological perspective objectifies people and looks at them as artifacts and not as real people. It does not take into account how Aboriginal people are today. Indeed, we are a major presence in Canadian society. We are living viable human beings that have much to offer the communities and institutions, in which we live and are involved in.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Reviews**

I have done a literature review of three areas:

The first is about Aboriginal Education, the second area is about needs assessment modalities, and the third is about the use of the Medicine Wheel as discussed by different Aboriginal professionals.

#### **Literature Review of Aboriginal Education**

Aboriginal education was examined in many ways in this literature review. Most of the information was historical in nature, but it also identified cultural differences between Aboriginal and European values. Educational topics covered included a framework on Indian Education in Manitoba from the Fort Alexander Band. This is my home community. There was information about various topics which included: Native American teacher education in Alberta; the Medicine Wheel teachings from various authors; an Indian perspective of self esteem and the tools to improve this; and finally, how Indians were educated with books and other materials not related to their own culture, "The Indian Education Paper Phase One" by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (1982) showed examples of the irrelevance of curriculum and curriculum materials for native learners.

L. Akan (1992) in "A Saulteaux Elders View of Native education" shared how Aboriginal students must learn how to combine education from Aboriginal and European cultures. J. W. Friesen (1987) in "Multicultural Practice and Native Education" identified how we can be sensitive about multicultural issues and

finally, the Manitoba Metis Federation (1990) spoke about how Metis people continue to be involved in the development of their own education.

Education, which supports and validates Aboriginal peoples requires an awareness of cultural differences which are present within the education system. This awareness or lack thereof, is critical from elementary to post-secondary education. In the article, " Academic Discourse about Native Education: Using Two Pairs of Eyes," Carl Urion (1991) identifies cultural differences in the way people write about Aboriginal people. He specifically refers to the academic discourse in formal education. Urion identifies how Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal peoples have different ways to talk about Indians in the literature. Urion speaks of "the acculturation model which describes a kind of dialectics as well, because it assumes an initial definition of polarity -two cultures juxtaposed in an asymmetrical relationship."(Urion p.4 )

" Dialectics describes a relationship between opposing poles, statements or populations. Dialectics is the term used to describe the tension between academic discourse and First Nations discourse."(Urion, p.4) Cultures may be asymmetrical, but the issue of polarity is questionable. How do different cultures exist together harmoniously in the same country and within the same educational system? At this point in time harmony has not been achieved, but there has been increased recognition for Aboriginal input into their own education which has assisted marginally to improve the overall situation. Education for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students is combined in most academic institutions, but there is much controversy in this combination because the underlying premise is that

Aboriginal people are to be assimilated into the dominant European culture. This has not worked well.

The time has come for Aboriginal education to be developed by Aboriginal people. Positive potential for change is seen in educational institutions in Winnipeg such as Children of the Earth High School and Nijimakwa Elementary School. Changes are noted by such works as the "Educational Framework Agreement on Indian Education in Manitoba" which was signed December 5th, 1990; an "Information Package for Indian Communities Contemplating Local Control over Education" (1990) and the "Fort Alexander Band Position Paper on Education" (1980). In the past, education for Aboriginal people was totally controlled by Indian Affairs and the churches. Local control means that the Aboriginal community members are becoming more involved in decision making about their children's education. The Fort Alexander position paper also expressed that community's decision in being more involved in educational issues. The changes made then affect today and are clearly seen, as Fort Alexander is one of the most progressive reserves in acquiring post-secondary programs within the community itself.

Traditionally, non-Aboriginal people have dominated in published academic writings about Aboriginal people. Their views have looked at Native people primarily from a historical stance. It is important to recognize that Aboriginal people have knowledge about their own history, which is quite different. Their knowledge includes current issues as well as historical ones and they also speak about themselves in the here and now and not only as pages of

history. The differences are related to having more concrete life experience and information about values, culture, and language. Information is shared more readily and fully when it is Aboriginal people collecting Aboriginal information. I have seen this being true when I collected information for this work. I found that it did make a difference that I was an Aboriginal person. I was often asked if I were an Anishinabe person, where I came from, or from where my family originated. Once I identified myself as Aboriginal and named my home community, there was often tremendous support to assist me to compile this data.

"In Dialogue on Native American Teacher Education: Report on a University of Lethbridge Colloquium" (Mazurek, 1989) the author stated, "It is important to have a knowledge and respect for Native world views." He continued, "It is also important to have an understanding of the Native community as the center of the Native experience..." (Mazurek, p.54). Aboriginal worldviews are quite diverse from those of non-Aboriginal people. For example, there are many Traditional teachings, which take a lifetime for people to learn how to carry them out. There are teachings that occur at every stage of life related to children, adolescents, adult, and Elder stages. There are teachings such as the Traditional "Code of Ethics" (Bopp, pp.74), the personal "gifts of the four directions" (Bopp, p.72), and "a framework of how we may achieve this growth using the Medicine Wheel as a guide." (Bopp, p.72)

A reoccurring symbol that is frequently used to identify life, culture, and lifelong transitions is The Medicine Wheel. " This is an ancient symbol used by almost all the Native people of North and South America" (Bopp, pp.9).

The Wheel can be studied in depth, as there are many facets to it. There are teachings of the four directions, the four colors, and the progression of the life cycle. Learning knowledge and developing respect takes time. Becoming involved in the Traditional ceremonies such as Sharing Circles, Sweat Lodges, Moon Ceremonies for women and learning different Traditional practices, which are taught to you by many teachers, does this. A teacher may be an Elder or someone who has learned the teachings before you and is passing on this information to you. The dominant form by which we teach each other is through an oral tradition.

Non- Aboriginal people will need to take the time to learn about Aboriginal views and values. This cannot be done in a purely academic manner. Reading literature is only one way of learning. Aboriginal views and values are often learned in an experiential way. This requires that non-Aboriginal people have direct contact with Aboriginal people as they carry out these practices and teachings. It is important to learn in an experiential manner. When learning about another culture it is imperative that respect be part of the process. This means deep respect and not merely curiosity seeking in order to learn about the values and teachings of the people.

The organizational structure of most Aboriginal communities is quite different from non- Aboriginal communities. It encompasses the individual, the family, extended family, community members, and members of a clan and nation. It also encompasses the mineral, plant, animal, and human components of the world (Bopp, 1984, Longclaws 1994). The people's experiences are the center

of their communities and are not derived from outside sources. While there are outside influences from other communities, urban areas, provinces and nationally, the core priorities lie within the Aboriginal communities themselves.

As I wrote my practicum report it tapped great pain in me, pain that we as Aboriginal people are still fighting to be heard and understood. Pain as I read the notion that Aboriginal people now want to be involved in their children's education. This is stated as if it were a new ideal when this is clearly not the truth. Aboriginal peoples have been pushed out of their children's education for hundreds of years due to government policies and policies of assimilation to mainstream them to European culture. Parents have always wanted their children to be educated. They knew their children must learn in order to survive. They could and did teach life values and lessons independently in the past. It has always been a problem of *how* the children were taught that was the issue.

An ethnocentric system that criticizes and attempts to nullify another culture in the name of education is not a *good* educational system. An educational system that teaches a person to hate themselves and their community is not a *good* system. Yet this is what Aboriginal people have had to deal with for over a century. The fact of the matter is that they are a distinct culture. Non-Aboriginal people have not respected this from the time of original contact. This may be due to their own ethnicity and attempts to prove that they are a more powerful nation. This was clearly seen through the processes of assimilation and Christianizing of Aboriginal people. Subsequently, problems of



lost identity have arisen from this and led to problems such as poverty, suicide and abuse.

F.C. Pepper, (1991) discusses an "Indian perspective of self-esteem." For many years the self-esteem of Aboriginal students has been ignored and deflated. There needs to be true concern for Aboriginal students' development. Pepper suggests that one method of improving self-esteem is to apply the concept of the Medicine Wheel to assist students to heal themselves. "The Medicine Wheel is a circle of harmony and courage" (Pepper, p.146). He identifies four segments to be concerned with when doing this. They consist of focusing on uniqueness, connectiveness, power and models" (Pepper, p.150). (See Appendix D for the Intact Medicine Wheel: High Self-Esteem & the Broken Medicine Wheel: Low Self-Esteem). He states if students can be assisted to develop a positive concept of themselves and the gifts they can offer the world they will sense their uniqueness. Each person has special gifts they can offer to the world such as patience, kindness, respect, and courage, to identify only a few qualities. People are unique because every person has their own experiences and development. This ensures that we are not all "put together" the same way and therefore are humanly unique. We can share these gifts with others in order to make a better community or world. If students have a sense of belonging to their family and their community, then their identity is joined to their heritage and they will have connectiveness.

"The healing of ourselves, our families, our communities, and our Nations must take into account everything around us, and within us. No matter

what activity we are engaged in, we need interconnectedness in all things to achieve wholeness" (O'Meara, p.121). Being connected in this manner is important to Aboriginal people because this is their common worldview. This worldview promotes wholeness and balance for Aboriginal people (O'Meara 1996, Longclaws 1994). Power comes from being able to take charge of one's own life and to be able to accomplish goals as well as to make errors in one's self development. "In the Native community, the holistic teachings of the Elders served to develop cognitive, physical, social and spiritual competence" (Pepper 1991). The key is the Elders and the teachers supporting students to develop their own sense of power. Using culturally relevant values and practices in teaching students can do this. This assists to empower young people by making their lessons relevant to themselves, their families and communities. Two of the most powerful tools of empowerment I have experienced include teaching Aboriginal students about the assimilation of Aboriginal people to Euro-Canadian culture (Carroll, 1986) also and teaching them about the Traditional ways of our people. This assists them to develop an awareness of the impact of Euro-Canadian culture upon them and it assists them to develop a culturally relevant spiritual support they can use to empower themselves in their daily lives.

In order to develop to their fullest, students need to have positive role models to follow. This can be done through the Elders and other leaders in our communities. Adults must consider themselves as teachers for their children and provide positive role modeling. Those people who are further along in their goals in such activities as education must provide role models for others so that they

can have hope to improve the quality of their lives for all Aboriginal peoples. Pepper states, " Although self-esteem is a Euro- American culture based concept, it can be seen as relevant to understanding a person in the Indian culture" (Pepper, p.145). Of course self-esteem is important to Aboriginal people. Prior to contact with Europeans, Aboriginal people had their own identity and culture. They had positions and roles of which they were proud. Aboriginal peoples are regenerating these roles today. They are blossoming. Many people are more vocal about having pride of being Aboriginal. It is important to keep this positive self-regard open and growing. Improving the self-concept of children, youth and mature students within the education system can do this.

Mark Nagler (1975), in "Natives Without a Home", states that " Indians have not fared well within the education system. Until the present time, the majority of Indians on reserves were educated with books and other material that were seldom related to their own culture, but rather reflected that of middle-class Canadian society " (Nagler, p.24). Aboriginal people of today are still educated with materials that are irrelevant to them. There are still many books that speak about Aboriginal people in derogatory terms. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (1982), in the article " The Indian Education Paper Phase One," recognized that the fundamental problem with Indian education was the irrelevance of curriculum and curriculum materials for Native learners. Furthermore, it stated that this problem could only be corrected by Indianizing the curriculum." (Brady, 1991) Indianizing the curriculum means making it culturally relevant. Many people are concerned about how this can be done.

There is fear this will mean over-riding the current educational system. I believe this can happen. I have seen it work quite well at the Children of the Earth High School where the history of Aboriginal people was viewed from an Aboriginal perspective and used in the curriculum. The focus literature for Language Arts is taken from Native authors, and the students are taught to be proud of their Aboriginal heritage by learning the Native languages, teachings and values of their own people in a good way.

There is still fear that Aboriginal values will have an impact on the education system and the educators themselves. It must be remembered that " as late as 1940, one half of the Indian pupil population...approximately 9,000 students...were in residential schools... In 1969, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs took over the operation of all Indian residential schools, most of which were closed in the 1970s. Today only seven Indian student residences are still in operation, all in Saskatchewan, at the request of First Nations " (INAC Information Sheet, April 1993). Therefore, Canadian people have not had a long experience with Aboriginal people being actively involved in their children's and communities' education. To this day there are concerns about how Aboriginal people will do in taking up these duties. These doubts are unfounded, often cast by the media and the discriminating infrastructure of the non-Aboriginal populace towards Aboriginal people. Media stereotyping is particularly harmful.

An example of a negative, doubting voice can be heard in a quote by Diane Longboat (1990), " In Canada today an Indian adolescent male has more chances of ending up in Kingston Penitentiary than of going to university, a

Native girl has more of a chance of being a mother at 18 than of graduating from high school” (Collier, p.109). At all levels of Canadian society Aboriginal people are told that they are high-risk people with very little potential for success. These negative messages are being passed onto Aboriginal students. The educational system needs to develop a natural way of assisting students to develop a positive sense of self. Pepper (1991) informs us that doing work with parents and teachers of young students can do this. They are identified as the core people who have an impact upon the students. They are able to have a positive force in developing uniqueness with students. It means that the young people will be taught about the special qualities of their ancestors and communities and will learn that they can offer positively to the communities they live in, where ever that may be.

Connectiveness is a particularly difficult issue for Aboriginal students. For many decades in Canada, family structures were broken apart by the residential school system. The children were taken away from their parents and communities for months and sometimes for years at a time. This made them become strangers to one another. Important familial bonds were not fully developed or were frequently lost or broken. Today, Aboriginal people are redeveloping connectiveness by returning to our Traditional ways, reuniting with our communities, and by working together on provincial and international goals.

Models for a positive sense of self are becoming more prevalent as more people become involved in the Traditional forms of healing and by the renewed role of Elders as the source for knowledge and direction in all of their

affairs. There are many people in the communities to look to as positive role models. There are many kind, supportive and community minded individuals. The examples are numerous and they have to promote these positive role models in the communities. For example, there are people attending university or college, there are strong community workers, and finally, there are strong spiritual leaders who can teach many people.

In "The Image of the Indian", Chapter 4 of "Contact and Conflict: Indian- European Relations in British Columbia", (1983) Robin Fisher states, "Europeans tended to believe the worst about Indians." " The familiar stereotype of the Indian as treacherous, lazy, lascivious and dishonest..." was often portrayed. (Fisher, p.78) However, that image is changing in Canada as Aboriginal people are growing stronger. We are developing ourselves and a positive identity is being established.

The European ideas of the past still prevail today. Some non-Aboriginal people sometimes think they have grown beyond this. One only has to listen to how many people talk about and to Aboriginal people to see that the negative stereotypes are still present and need to be reckoned with. Even if non-Natives do not treat Indians this way themselves, they need to be aware of the history and actions of their ancestors to understand that there are long standing reasons for Native people to mistrust people from other cultures. " It was widely held, both in Britain and North America, that colonization by definition involved the extermination of the inferior indigenous peoples" (Fisher, p.87). Aboriginal

people were aware that they were to be exterminated, but the annihilation was unsuccessful and many Aboriginals are still alive and well today.

In "Walking and Talking: A Saulteaux Elder's View of Native Education", (1992) Linda Akan interviews Alfred Manitopeyes, a Saulteaux Elder from Muskcowekwun Band in southern Saskatchewan. She gives an indication of how healing can take place within the education system through her interview with Alfred. She informs us that the Elders of our community can give heedful guidance about which way to proceed in such matters. For example, " The Elder speaks highly of the white man's education, but does not advocate an uncritical acceptance of it all. He says that it must be accepted, but warns us that there are some aspects of education that need to be examined if they are to be used effectively" (Akan, p.209).

Throughout an Aboriginal student's education we have to be aware they are dealing with two worlds: Native and non-Native. They have to make decisions about how the two cultures mix for them. It is quite a balancing act to be culturally aware at all times and to be respectful of both cultures. As professionals, social workers need to be aware of the additional stress this places upon a student while supporting them through educational endeavors. "The Elders who taught me did not preach assimilation either way, only that it is not wise to be someone you are not" ( Akan, p.213). Due to the difficulties of dealing with assimilation some Aboriginal people have been confused about their identity due to mixed messages. For years this was brought upon by an education that attempted to Christianize, civilize, and assimilate many Aboriginal

people. It is important to value all parts of one's identity, whether pure or mixed in ethnic background.

Linda Akan states the Elders taught her that " ... there is no dignity in a philosophy that rejects oneself, because that implies not being happy with the Creator's job. It is not good to deny our identity, our Indianness, but neither is it good to proclaim it or impose it on others" (Akan, p.213). Many people reject themselves because of confusion about their culture. There are varying responses to this issue. As a means of survival, some totally deny their Native background, and there are some that strongly embrace their cultural roots. Choosing one side or the other can cause people to function in limited ways. Yet the struggle is difficult. People need to be particularly strong if they are of mixed blood because it is a difficult job to integrate their identity. There can be acceptance or rejection on both sides, depending on the people you come in contact with. It is an artful skill to find the best of both worlds and be comfortable with that situation.

Verna J. Kirkness (1991) states that " American Indian/ First Nations/ Native people have historically been under-represented in the ranks of colleges and university graduates in Canada and the United States." From an institutional perspective , the problem has been defined in terms of low achievement, high attrition, low retention, weak persistence etc." She suggests the need for a higher educational system that respects them for who they are, that is relevant to their view of the world, that offers reciprocity in their relationships with others and that helps them exercise responsibility over their own lives.



The statistics she noted were that:

- > “ In Canada in 1986, only 1.3% of the First Nations population had completed university, compared to 9.6% of the general population. (In other words, non-Indians were 7.4 times more likely to have successfully completed a degree program than First Nations people.” (Armstrong. Kennedy & Oberle, 1990)
- > in 1986, only 25 % of the First Nations population in Canada completed high school compared to half of the non-Indian education, and of those, only 23% went on to university, compared to 33% of the rest of population. Of those First Nations Students who commenced university studies, 25% earned a degree, compared to 55% of non-Indians. (Armstrong. Kennedy & Oberle, 1990)

Kirkness stated, “The most compelling problem that First Nations students face when they go to university is a lack of respect, not just as individuals, but more fundamentally as a people. (pp.4, Kirkness)

As John W. Friesen (1987) stated in his article, “Multicultural Practice: What About the Indians? ” a principle much extolled by educational multi-culturalists is that of assisting the student to develop pride in his or her heritage and in his or her community.” (Friesen, p.37) If this were actually done in education then the Native person would not have to consider identity issues and make choices about which culture will dominate their lives. The opportunity to have Native pride would be there. Friesen comments on multi-cultural policy and the Native Community, “Now it is an area about which few practitioners feel qualified to make comments about Aboriginal multi-cultural policy, thereby

necessitating Native input" (Friesen, p.36). Native people are now being recognized as being able to describe our own values our communities and us. For many years Native people were studied objectively and then described by non-Native policy makers. To consider consultation is a great stride in accepting that participation is necessary to deal with Native multi-cultural issues.

In summary, Aboriginal education is a very complicated subject to discuss and yet many issues cannot be ignored. I have covered the following areas: Aboriginal and academic discourse; knowledge and respect for Native world views; an Indian perspective of self-esteem; relevancy of curriculum and curriculum materials; negative messages that Aboriginal students must encounter; the image of the Indian; a Saulteaux Elder's view of education; and multicultural policy and practice. I commenced with Aboriginal and academic discourse. Accessible literature is important and at this point in our history we are seeing more Native newspapers, journals and book publications coming forward. I have enjoyed articles from the Canadian Journal of Native Education and books such as "Lost Harvests" by Sarah Carter (1990), "Indian School Days" by Basil Johnston (1988), and the "Aboriginal Law Handbook" by Shin Amal (1993). There is room for much more. The Aboriginal community is advancing and even in Winnipeg there are several Aboriginal newspapers publishing at this time. Examples of papers in Winnipeg are The First Perspective, Weetamah, and the Grassroots News.

Aboriginal literature is an important issue in academia because students need to be aware of whether Aboriginal people are written about from

an Aboriginal or from a non-Aboriginal perspective. These viewpoints can be quite different. There is much discourse about having respect for Aboriginal worldviews, but there is a long way to go. There is much denial about how Aboriginal people are represented in literature, in the media and in daily communication amongst people. There are many non-Aboriginal people who will ask for an explanation of the Aboriginal worldview. It is good they are inquiring, but it is more important for them to think about how they would actively pursue what it is. The best way is to become involved is to learn about the culture. Elders of the communities can be important contacts in providing information for those truly open to learning. They know the history of Aboriginal people. They know the values and traditions of the people. They are our spiritual leaders. They have the wisdom to use the information in a good way to promote what is best for the good of all the people in the community.

Education primarily deals with the mental aspects of a person, and occasionally the physical aspects are included in a program. However, it is also important to address the emotional and spiritual aspects of a person. Emotional distress can cause a person to ineffectively deal with situations and this can lead to a student who cannot progress well in their studies. Students may need just a little time with a counselor to sort out issues so they can carry on. This is particularly important with Aboriginal students if they come from remote areas to urban areas to complete their education.

"Students coming from Northern communities especially face a host of particular problems, many of which can be subsumed under the general heading of culture

shock; just catching buses in a big city and attending class in an institution of 5,000 students when you come from a home community of 350 can be traumatic" (Collier, p.115).

Spiritual aspects are not usually a high priority in Western education. However, within the Aboriginal community, spirituality is a way of life. It is a way people are taught lessons about how to deal with many different situations and this is how we get to know ourselves. Teaching Aboriginal students Traditional Ways can be very beneficial in providing support for them during school. This is one way people can be connected to community support. I have seen this function very effectively in two programs, namely, the Career Opportunities in Preparation for Employment Program for Aboriginal Women and the other, Anishinabe R.E.S.P.E.C.T. The teaching of Traditional ways must be done by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people in order to be effective.

Changes have commenced with such actions as the "Education Framework Agreement on Indian Education in Manitoba" (1990). With this agreement, Treaty Status Indians are to have control over what is to be included in their educational programming. The Manitoba Metis Federation also has a "Response Paper Respecting the Educational Goals of the Manitoba Metis Federation" (1988) to deal with the issues with which they are concerned. These are examples of how many Aboriginal people are becoming more active planners in their own education programs. Although the Education Framework Agreement is between Treaty Status Indians it must be recognized that the constitution of Canada recognizes Aboriginal people as " Indian, Metis, Inuit." However, all

Aboriginal people are striving towards their own community input into their education.

An example of this input is the National Review of First Nations Post-Secondary Education (2000). C. Bird did a study of 384 students from various Manitoba communities in January 2000: Here are some of the results:

“49% of the students stated they had adequate funding for transportation.

42% agreed and 40% disagreed there was adequate funding for living expenses for students. There was an issue about not being able to buy nutritional food for the student and their family.

40% agreed that they had adequate funding for accommodations, 33 % agreed they do and 22% had no opinion. This area spoke of requiring rental subsidies or cost sharing with other people.

47% stated that they had adequate funding for equipment. An issue that came up was the need to have a computer to do their studies.

42% indicated they had no opinion about childcare and 39% disagreed that there was adequate funding for childcare.” (pp. 9, Bird)

Furthermore in summary:

- PSSSP is the acronym for - The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development’s Post Secondary Support Program.”

- ISSP is the acronym for- The Indian Support Services Program (ISSP)

“ This study indicated that although PSSSP and ISSP policies and programs have provided access for First Nations to post-secondary education, they

continue to negatively impact First Nations development in post secondary education with respect to:

- Governance, management and administrative systems;
- Involvement in post-secondary planning process to impact policy changes and funding structures;
- Limited funding to meet the demand by First Nations students to access post-secondary education opportunities.
- Limited funding for student allowances to meet the cost of inflation in regions; and the development of First Nations post secondary institutions.” (pp.4, Bird)

The ensuing section is information from the research and analysis directorate of Indian and Northern Affairs. They report : “In 1991, the continuation rate to post secondary programs was 61% for Registered Indians (compared to 77% for other Aboriginal people and 76% for other Canadians). Of the Registered Indians continuing to post-secondary education, 57% completed their course of study.” (pp. 1, Santiago). Information from the Department of Indian Affairs which summarizes the effects of age and gender on attaining post-secondary education shows the following: In all groups the continuation rate was the lowest among persons ages 15-24 years of age (63%), for 15-44 year of age (84%) and finally, for 45-64 year of age it was (87%). High school was not completed in the younger years of 15-24 however this did increase in the 25-44 year old segment ( 60%) and the 45-64 year old segment (64%). The continuation among females was (75%) and males (69%). It was also noted that “Registered Indians were less likely to attend and to complete a course of study

in a university than a trade or post-secondary program.” (pp.i, Santiago) While the Department of Indian Affairs notes this there is no recognition as to the reasons why young Aboriginal people do not pursue post-secondary education as a bridge to a career after high school. They have however, noted the following at the end of this report: “Finally research is required for a better understanding of the relatively high drop-out rates of Registered Indians at all levels of schooling and to find ways of rectifying this situation.(pp.33, Santiago)

The solution must now begin in earnest. The effects of racist schooling must be dealt with; the implementation of Native control over education must be put in place and honored. I have covered only a few main issues about this vast topic. Education is a very complicated topic to cover, but it is a very important one. This is a major influence upon our children as they learn who they are and what they can become in society. We do teach them at home as parents, but schooling still has a very powerful influence upon people. Education is a strong influence on students at all levels. Aboriginal education requires that we need to be aware of cultural differences in education. The incorporation of appropriate cultural values is of primary importance for Aboriginal people.

A “Pandora’s Box” has been opened with changes for Aboriginal people and it will not be easily closed and ignored again. Eurocentric education has been far too destructive, especially during the residential school era. Extermination of a culture should not be an option again. Not in this country, or any other one in the world. Changing the educational system so that it is more sensitive to the needs of Aboriginal students is important. There needs to be

mechanisms in place in order to commence healing the negative effects of the old education system. Different ways of doing this will include: Aboriginal communities taking control over their own education; Aboriginal people providing input to the curriculum; and insuring the input of the people at all levels of education. This will include the opinions of children, adolescents, adults and Elders to give a balanced view of the needs at every stage of development



## **Needs Assessment Methods**

My way of participating in making changes to the educational system is by doing a need assessment of Aboriginal students at the University level. This needs assessment will explore the perspective of adults, and adult students. In order to prepare for this work I have examined several different assessment models such as, Dickens (1994); Lewis (1983); Portillo (1996); Neuber (1980); Bruyere (1996); Light (1990); Kettner, (1990); Odjig-White (1996); and Witkin & Altschuld (1995)

## **Literature Review of Needs Assessment Methods**

I will primarily use the needs assessment defined in "Planning and Conducting Needs Assessments" by Belle Ruth Witkin & James Altschuld (1995). My reason for choosing this book is because it has applications to a broad number of contexts and disciplines. It has examples of how a needs assessment is done in an educational, social services and health care setting. This was a good combination as I am doing a social work practicum within an educational institution. I also found it useful that the book was geared toward students as well as an experienced management professional. I was attracted to it the most when the authors stated that "the need assessment engages the active involvement of a wide cross-section of recipients of service, providers of the service, and representatives of the organization or system under whose aegis services or goods are provided" ( Witkin & Altschuld, pp.ixv ). I liked the notion that the authors implied that an assessment not be a top down assessment

where only a few people decide on what needs to be addressed. Witkin & Altschuld (1995) suggest a three-phase model, which is flexible for adaptation to different circumstances. This plans and manages an assessment. I found it worked well in this combined social work and educational evaluation.

Witkin & Altschuld also suggests five specific methods of conducting a needs assessment:

- I. **The first is using records and social indicators.** Social indicators “ are variables representing important characteristics of a group or social situation, which agencies usually keep track of over a period of years.” ( Witkin, pp.128) Sources of social indicators include the results of school, district and nationwide assessment programs in education. In social services this would be demographics of clients served, previous needs assessments or evaluation reports of programs. “Records are based on forms or standard mechanisms for collecting intake, process or outcome data.” (Witkin & Altschuld, pp.110)
- II. **The second style of needs assessment includes the use of surveys, interviews, and critical incident techniques.** “Surveys, especially in the form of written questionnaires, are the most frequently used means of gathering data in NA, either alone or in conjunction with other methods.” ( Witkin & Altschuld, pp.128) It is recommended that surveys not be used alone.  
  
Individual interviews are an alternative to surveys. The prevalent feature with interviews is that the interviewer asks the questions and records the

answers. Interviews may be done in person or by telephone. Interviews are good because the interviewer can add probes to unclear answers and there is a higher rate of participation than the mailed survey. Finally, "Critical incident techniques are direct observations or self reports of specific behaviors that relate to performance in a given situation." ( Witkin & Altschuld, pp. 150)

A common procedure is to ask respondents to recall specific events recently observed that show where an agency needs improving. They are also asked to recall events where the agency is doing an adequate job. Positive and negative incidents are sorted according to the program issues. This is good to identify the strengths and weaknesses of a program or agency.

**III. The third method of assessment is the basic group processes.**

Groups provide face to face interaction among those who have knowledge or would benefit from the assessment. "They demonstrate the willingness of the needs assessors to understand and take into consideration the views of the stakeholders." (Witkin & Altschuld, pp. 153) Three basic processes popular for the NA include: The community group forum, the nominal group technique, and the focus group interview. The community group forum may be called a town meeting. In this example a community is called together to discuss a significant issue. This could be used in the exploratory phase of the NA.

The nominal group technique consists of 6 to 10 people whose main purpose is produce a large number of ideas in a relatively short period of time. "The members do not interact as they would in other group processes." (Witkin & Altschuld, pp.167) The outcome is to make an extensive list of brainstormed or rank-ordered ideas.

"The focus group interview is a structured process for interviewing a small group of individuals, usually between 8 and 12." (Witkin & Altschuld, pp.171) The purpose is to obtain in-depth views about a topic of concern. Obtaining consensus is not the goal. The objective is to learn how the participants feel about the topic and to identify the range of perspectives regarding it.

**iv. The fourth method of assessment is specialized survey and group techniques for data gathering and analysis.**

This includes specialized techniques such as: DACUM, the mailed Delphi Survey, the group or modified Delphi technique, electronic groups and concept mapping. DACUM acronym for Developing a Curriculum is a small group discussion focused on job tasks. Those who specialize in that type of job do this. "It identifies the key tasks necessary for defining or carrying out a job." (Witkin & Altschuld, pp.189) It is primarily suitable for setting up training programs for new or changing occupations. The mailed Delphi survey is a survey over time with the same panel of respondents. This aids in predicting the future efficacy of programs. The group or modified Delphi technique would be conducting a survey with people who

meet regularly. "The Delphi survey could be conducted every 3 to 4 weeks or 3 to 4 months periods without the complications of the mailed survey." (Witkin & Altschuld, pp.202) Electronic groups use electronic techniques to conduct meetings. This would be doing such things as teleconferences, email, and telephone. "The use of email networks for collecting comments and thoughts about issues from selected audiences has become a routine mechanism for collecting data." ( Witkin& Altschuld, pp.204) Finally, there is concept mapping. This involves both a group process and a computer analysis.

For example a group would meet for a day and brainstorm ideas regarding a problem or issue. The information is collected and immediately put in and analyzed with a computer program which is in the meeting room.

" The analysis procedure uses multidimensional scaling and clustering algorithms to produce map representations in two-dimensional spaces. It depicts clusters, their relation in map space, and the strength of the ratings of each cluster." ( Witkin & Altschuld, pp.204)

IV. **There are future oriented needs assessment procedures which includes strategic planning, scenarios, cross-impact analysis, future wheels and trend analysis.** Strategic planning is being flexible in adhering to a goal or set of goals. It copes with the dynamics of a rapidly changing environment. "It assumes that organizations must monitor and continually adapt to external forces affecting them." ( Witkin & Altschuld, pp.211) Scenarios are snap-shots of what some specific future event or

system will look like. "If we have a vision of the desired target state and compare it to the present situation, we have a need to be considered as a candidate for resolution." ( Witkin & Altschuld pp.224) Cross impact analysis is the use of computer analysis to help the assessor get a sense of how factors interact. "The forecaster can vary the assumptions and levels of quantitative variables to see the effect on other variables." ( Witkin & Altschuld, pp.224) The future wheel: "is intended to guide thinking about a key future event or situation and its potential for affecting other events or situations that may occur in the future." ( Witkin & Altschuld, pp.226) A group of 8 to 12 people using a brainstorming technique results in a pictorial representation-the hub of the wheel, with spokes radiating from it "Labeled clusters are depicted as circles radiating from the center wheel event, with their sub-themes entered as small circles emanating from the clusters until the outer level of the large circle is reached. The final future wheel serves as a resourceful device for thinking about the future." ( Witkin & Altschuld, pp.228) "Trend analysis is a method of determining possible futures by extending a graphed trend of data in several ways, relating each extension to appropriate influential factors." ( Witkin & Altschuld pp.230)

Most of the needs assessments are done with the techniques which focus on the present. This assessment used focus groups and individual interviews to gather information.

Chapter three of "Community Counseling: A Human Services Perspective, Second Edition" (1983) by Judith A. Lewis is about community based planning. "Effective planning involves assessing the needs of the community, setting priorities, identifying available resources, and developing programs to meet the needs that are identified" (Lewis p.58). "The goals that are developed represent the desires of the community members as they see them. The characteristics of community based planning are:

1. The people who deliver and use services are active in planning and evaluating programs.
2. Agencies work together in co-operative helping networks.
3. There is a permanent coordinating organization that represents workers and community members in the planning process.
4. There is a mechanism that allows for reaction to specific issues.
5. Conventional planning agencies are open to broad participation.
6. There is an ongoing dialogue among governmental agencies, social planning agencies, direct service agencies, and community groups.
7. The rights of consumers as well as the uniqueness of each agency are protected at all stages of the planning process" (Lewis, p.58).

The reason why I liked this type of planning strategy is because the people who deliver and use the services are active in planning and evaluating the programs. In doing the needs assessment of Aboriginal students I would hope it to be a community-based venture. I have treated the Aboriginal student body as

a community and had them inform me of their felt needs while they were attending school. They had an opportunity to evaluate the services they received.

Keith A. Neuber's book, "Needs Assessment: A Model for Community Planning" (1980) presents a human services planning model. "This model is designed to utilize data collected from three sources: demographic/statistical profiles, designated key informants and individual interviews with randomly selected consumers or potential consumers" (Neuber, p.16). This "Community Oriented Needs Assessment Model" (Neuber, p.18) compares and utilizes this data in program planning and evaluation. One of its major forms of usefulness is the involvement of consumers in the need assessment process. It can also provide community education as the information is distributed to an extensive number of consumers and key informants. This model can also be replicated in different geographic locations. Agency staff has traditionally defined services; however, with this model, consumers are defining the needs which lead to services. This approach also supports a social services style of proceeding with a need assessment. The basic information of needs assessment must come from the people themselves otherwise the services planned will likely not meet the needs of the community. This is particularly true if the agency staff is not members of the community for which services are planned. This book contains good appendices which consist of sample instruments, press releases, consent form, letter to consumer and key informant participants, examples of data sources, a sampling procedure, and data use for service delivery.



**“By Design: Planning Research on Higher Education” (1990) Richard J. Light et. al. discusses reasons for doing research in American post-secondary institutions. Although this is American-based, many of the ideas of research can be transferred to Canadian post-secondary institutions. This book contains technical information as well as how to do this type of investigation. The authors use three general paradigms, which are descriptive, relational and experimental in nature. An explanation of these are: the descriptive paradigm describes things the way they are, the relational perspective examines relationships between two or more factors and in an experimental paradigm, the researcher executes a specific treatment or treatments in order to learn about its efficacy. It is of primary importance to, "articulate a set of specific research questions, as good design flows from clear goals" (Light, p.13).**

**I found this book to be particularly helpful to my work because it focused on post-secondary education research. It has a section titled, "Why are research questions so important?" (Light, p.14) It includes questions related to the effectiveness of a college's advising system for undergraduate students. This enabled me to think about focusing more critically as I planned this assessment. I found that there were many sources to consider when planning this work such as input from the Aboriginal Focus Programs at the University of Manitoba, the Aboriginal Student Center, as well as general information from the students themselves. It is important that the primary information of needs come from the students. However, we need to be aware that we are all affected from different levels of environment such as the Aboriginal Student Center, the university**

professors, the university political structure, and funding policies as well as our own Aboriginal communities and how they affect our lives.

### **The Medicine Wheel**

The Medicine Wheel “is an ancient symbol used by almost all the Native people of North and South America” (Bopp p.9). “The Medicine Wheel teaches that we have four aspects to our nature: the physical, the mental, the emotional, and the spiritual. Each of these areas must be equally developed in a healthy well-balanced individual through the development and uses of volition i.e. will. ”

(Bopp p.12) The Medicine Wheel is an important concept for students to learn. It encompasses many basic teachings for Aboriginal people and there are many areas where this can be used for healing. All of these areas need to be balanced in order for a person to function effectively. They can also be used as points to guide us to where we need to develop ourselves and need support from others. The concept of the Wheel can be used with individuals, groups, and communities, locally, nationally and internationally. This concept can be used to plan, develop and deliver programs. It has already been used to develop health and well-being programs in Winnipeg at agencies such as the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Center and the Native Women's Transition Center.

Florence Bruyere (March, 1996) has developed a Medicine Wheel designed to consider the emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental needs of students. She has devised this from her eight years of experience as the Aboriginal student advisor at the University of Manitoba. As the diagram shows, the emotional quadrant examines areas such as loneliness and peer or family

support. The physical area includes being aware that campus is often larger than many communities. The spiritual/cultural component encompasses respect and understanding for family and spiritual obligations, while the mental/ academic recognizes areas of study and time management. . This Medicine Wheel enabled me to come to a decision about the types of questions used in the interviews with the students. Using traditional Aboriginal ways in doing this assessment is important so that the needs of the students will be examined in a balanced way. It will aid to identify which needs are fulfilled and which areas are lacking in supports for students who come to the Aboriginal Student Center. The teachings of the four directions are important to me because it has been only by these teachings that I have begun to feel like a whole person. It is this healing which I would like to pass on to other Aboriginal students and to the Aboriginal community, which I ultimately serve. The university in general covers the mental and physical aspects of a student's university life but it is equally important to address the emotional and spiritual/cultural component. Applying the concepts of the Medicine Wheel to a needs assessment ensures that we give the student(s) the opportunity to speak about those needs.

Lena Odjig White has written about "Medicine Wheel Teachings in Native Language Education" (1996). She covers the use of the Medicine Wheel in Native education very similarly to Bruyere's work, but she also includes teachings of the Seven Gifts of the Grandfather's which include:

*"Nbwaakaawin/ to cherish knowledge is to know Wisdom;*

*Zaagidwin/ to know love is to know peace;*

*Mnaadendiwin/ to honour all of the Creation is to have Respect.*

*Aakde'win/ bravery is to face the foe with integrity;*

*Gwekwaadziwin/ honesty in facing a situation is to be brave;*

*Dbadendiziwin/ humility is to know yourself as a sacred part of the Creation.*

*Debwewin/ truth is to know all of these things" (Odjig, p.119).*

These teachings are interrelated with practicing these ways when instructing students. They are good principles to follow for any professional who has contact with students and for personal healing.

My goal was that the students be able to describe the needs they encounter as they are attending university from a subjective or personal format. "Descriptive studies characterize the status quo; they do not tell you that things are the way they are" (Light, p.2). My belief is that as we speak the students will inform me about the way that they see the university system and how it affects them. I hope that I will be able to echo and validate some of their concerns. To find solutions we must look at what the problems are. It is my hope that this assessment will empower the students, the Aboriginal Student Center, and the

University of Manitoba to work together toward solutions to provide expert services for Aboriginal students.

### **Experiential Preparation**

I spent time from September to December 1996 in the Aboriginal Student Center to generally observe the interactions between staff and students and to get a sense of the process of how students' needs are currently attended to through the efforts of the center. I was able to do this for several hours a day and I made an effort to attend meetings, which focused on Aboriginal issues and attended staff meetings. This work was done as a research student and as a volunteer. I helped out in the office as much as possible doing duties such as answering the telephone. I observed the types of calls and issues that the student advisor and the coordinator of the center have to deal with in regards to the students, and the many contacts with other educational supports within and outside of the University of Manitoba. I spoke to the students on a casual basis. I met them in the main office as they came for supports and in the Aboriginal Student lounge on a daily basis. I have learned, by observation and casual chats, some of the key issues students have had to deal with.

These issues are many. For example: There are students who have come to discuss personal issues, family problems, relationships, housing, finances, racism, discrimination by professors, general stress, information about required courses, how to drop or acquire courses or programs within the university, and how to contact other education institutions nationally and internationally. They told of us of their need for tutors, and the difficulties of

reading and writing at the university level. There are often difficulties in obtaining tutors, especially now, with the reduction to these services.

They make contacts with their band offices, education authorities, student aid, and other areas for assistance. The students come to the Center and the student lounge for general support and camaraderie with other Aboriginal students. They say it is good to speak to someone in your own language when the university is primarily English. The lounge is a safe place to talk about Aboriginal issues that often come up when attending university.

They state the academic focus is often lacking in Aboriginal content or worse yet, it is very derogatory to Aboriginal people, communities and values. I also attended the Traditional teaching circles, which are offered at the university several times each term. This enables students to get in touch with and participate with other students who are interested in Traditional ways. The teaching circles are appropriate for people at any level of learning of Aboriginal culture and are not limited to only Aboriginal participation.

I attended Aboriginal Student Center staff meetings, the Aboriginal Network Group and the Advisory Council for the Aboriginal Student Center. I also assisted the ACCESS program in interviewing students for the September, 1997 intake.

The political structure of the university was examined and I became familiar in particular with the Aboriginal programs throughout the University of Manitoba. This allowed me to become more familiar with the political milieu of the university concerning Aboriginal issues. I consulted with the various directors and

coordinators of the programs primarily to inquire about how I may contact Aboriginal students connected to their programs. They were all very generous in their support about the work that I was doing.

In December 1996, the new Aboriginal Student Center was officially opened. This meant an expansion of office space from one room to five office spaces. It was a welcome change for it was difficult for the staff to provide services in only one room. There was now room for confidentiality, which is of primary importance in some circumstances. The staff has increased from one advisor to a coordinator and advisor. The budget expansion for 1998 has allowed for support administration staff in the main office to deal with the general business there. I was happy that I came at a time to see expansion of these services. It has been exciting and stressful at the same time.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

#### **The number of subjects and procedures:**

My plan in this research design was to interview 100 students. The actual work, which occurred, was that I interviewed 82 students through a mix of individual and focus groups. There were 50 individual interviews. The number of students was decreased from the original 100 students planned due to constraints of students' schedules and availability. There were five focus groups that took part in discussions. The individual interviewees completed questionnaires to provide information about their needs. I chose this number of students because the population of Aboriginal students on the University of Manitoba campus is estimated to be 900 to 1,000, 33% of which are Metis students. The total number of non-Aboriginal students is calculated at 23,000. The Aboriginal students make up approximately 3.9% of all students on campus. Florence Bruyere, the director of the Aboriginal Student Center for the 1996 academic school year, calculated this sum from various sources such as the Department of Indian Affairs, the Manitoba Metis Federation, Aboriginal Education Authorities, the Tribal Councils, and the Aboriginal Student Association at the University of Manitoba.

The Aboriginal Student Association at the University of Manitoba has approximately 150 members and it follows with the larger population quote that 33% of these students are of Metis descent. There are no official statistics recorded at the university regarding the Aboriginal student population at this time.



33% of these students are of Metis descent. There are no official statistics recorded at the university regarding the Aboriginal student population at this time.

**The Setting:** The primary site for this assessment was The Aboriginal Student Center of the University of Manitoba. This department is part of Student Affairs at the University of Manitoba. "The center provides "supports in a manner consistent with the culture and values of Aboriginal peoples with the purpose of increasing/enhancing the accessibility and retention of Aboriginal students.

The Aboriginal Student Center is open to all Aboriginal students, regardless origin (First Nation, Status, Inuit and Metis)." (Pamphlet, University of Manitoba)

The individual interviews took place in the Aboriginal Student Center, and the focus groups were arranged to take place in the boardroom of the Aboriginal Student Center. Some groups were held at the Drake Center for the Aboriginal Business Education Program, the Polo Park Continuing Education Center, and the Winnipeg Education Center. This was to make it more comfortable for students to meet in a familiar area.

**Personnel:** My practicum committee and the Aboriginal Student Center.

### **Development of the Survey**

#### **Instrumentation:**

In order to prepare for the development of the interview schedule I reviewed the work of following authors: Schalock, 1995; Chickering, 1995; Bopp, 1984; Bruyere, 1996; Odjig White, 1 996; Longclaws, 1994; and Pepper, 1994.

The area of developing questions was the most difficult area for me to formulate. The range of ideas for a needs assessment of Aboriginal students is

for the interviews and I feel that specifying them through the use of the Medicine Wheel was helpful.

Bopp, 1984 Bruyere, 1996; Odjig White, 1996; Longclaws, 1994; and Pepper, 1994 are all authors who have used the Medicine Wheel framework in their fields. The questions for this assessment will be related to the Medicine Wheel that means that the spiritual, physical, emotional and mental aspects of the students' lives will be examined.

Odjig-White, 1996 has applied the Medicine Wheel model for use in a Native language education program. She utilizes three wheels in this program. They include Model A - "Developing and Implementing a Native Language Program", Model B - "Four Language Teaching Methods", and Model C - "Roles and Responsibilities in the Practicum". ( See Appendix E) She shows us how the Medicine Wheel Framework can be adapted to different areas in the educational process.

Bruyere, 1996 has developed a model of the Medicine Wheel to reflect two areas, Aboriginal student needs and program components at the University of Manitoba. She has incorporated various aspects of these wheels with the students connected to the Aboriginal Student Center.

L. Longclaws (1994) describes how in social work specifically, the ecological model and Medicine Wheel model can be combined and used in a culturally based manner with Anishinabe people. He describes it as an appropriate way of providing social services with Aboriginal people.

Bopp gives us the teachings of "The Sacred Tree" and the Medicine Wheel. In them we can find "healing, power, wisdom and security" (Bopp, p.7). "The fundamental value of this tool, the Medicine Wheel, is a way of measuring our own progress and development, and a means for assessing what we must work on in our journey through life" (Bopp p.40).

Finally, Pepper also shows us how the Medicine Wheel can be utilized to develop self-esteem in students. He uses the Medicine Wheel and concentrates on four areas, which include: uniqueness, power, connectiveness, and role models. Pepper shows us how when any one of these areas is broken it can lead to a student with low self-esteem. He suggests that it is possible for each of these areas to be healed so that the student " comes to know and accept themselves, to resolve conflicts more constructively, to mature..." (p.60 Pepper).

In summary, the above examples, which incorporated the Medicine Wheel in education, social work, and as an experiential life model, provided me with ideas of how I might use the Traditional perspective within the context of developing and carrying out a Needs Assessment of Aboriginal Students at the University of Manitoba.

### **Needs Assessment Modality**

I have primarily used the needs assessment model as defined in "Planning and Conducting Needs Assessments" by Belle Ruth Witkin & James Altschuld (1995). They have constructed a three-phase model, which is flexible for adaptation to different circumstances. (See Appendix B)

Phase one is the pre-assessment. Its purpose is "is to investigate what is already known about the needs about the target group, to determine the focus and scope of the assessment and to gain commitment for all stages of the assessment" (Witkin & Altschuld, p.20). Preassessment " also provides the basis for determining the most appropriate kinds of data gathering for the assessment" (Witkin & Altschuld, p. 20).

Phase two is the Assessment Phase which is to " document the status, the "what is" of the issues, compare the status with the vision of "what should be", and to determine the magnitude of the needs and their major causes" ( Witkin & Altschuld, p.40).

Phase three is the Post-Assessment Phase. It answers important questions such as: "What needs are the most critical? Why haven't they been resolved before this? What are some possible solution strategies? How can we choose the best one(s)?" (Witkin & Altschuld, p.75).

This phase is designed to help the organization answer such questions.

" The needs assessment is not complete unless plans are made to use the information in a practical way" (Witkin & Altschuld, p.75). This book is a very helpful guide for learning to do needs assessments. Instead of looking at this work from a top down perspective it engages people at different levels. This includes a cross-section of recipients of the service, providers of the service, and representatives of the organization who provide the service. The book includes examples of needs assessments focused mainly from an educational planning or

evaluation perspective, but these can be transferable to other social agency settings.

### **A Student-Centered Approach**

This assessment was done focusing on the receivers or consumers of services: the students. I wanted to do an assessment that investigated the needs of Aboriginal students from a bottom-up approach, which would be viewing it from a community-oriented perspective. This perspective is the approach recommended by Witkin & Altschuld. Too often, Aboriginal people are studied from upper levels within hierarchical institutions and judgments are made from that perspective. I wanted to reverse this patriarchal way of examining the needs of Aboriginal students.

### **The Interview Schedule**

I did confidential interviews with the students in the Aboriginal Student Center at the University of Manitoba using an interview schedule I developed. (See Appendix A pp.118) The questions were used in a different way with the focus groups. I had the students complete the demographic information but the questions from the schedule were available only to myself as topics of discussion for the groups. I informed the groups that we were examining student life and to openly discuss them as they related to the Medicine Wheel.

## **Evaluation of the Questions for the Interview Schedule**

In order to evaluate whether the questions were appropriate, I interviewed three students on an individual basis. At this time the effectiveness of the questions was examined and recorded. The students were asked for their opinions about how applicable the questions were and if they had any recommendations for changes. I also asked for further questions they thought would be applicable to ask students. I then used the amended questions with future students involved in the assessment. In order to evaluate the focus group information, one trial focus group was done with the initial questions I compiled. I assessed how well the questions functioned in the group setting. The groups were also asked for further recommendations for changes. I used these amended questions with the other groups involved in the assessment. I had meetings with my advisor to ensure that my practicum progressed as it should. I consulted with the Aboriginal Student Center coordinator to ensure that the needs assessment proceeded appropriately.

## **Recording and Implementation of the Procedures**

The information from individual interviews was recorded on the interview survey forms. The questions on the forms were divided into four areas, covering the mental, emotional, physical, and mental aspects of student life. The information was gathered and the number of responses for each question was noted.

I then tabulated the number of responses for each part of a section by using a computer database to keep an accurate count of the responses to the questions.

This enabled me to get a table of information in order to organize the data, count the responses, and then to analyze the information in an orderly manner.

I also made graphs of the information so that one could track visual trends easily extracted from the collected data.

The focus groups were audio taped. I transcribed the tapes in order to obtain the information from the sessions. The groups were run by using a question from the individual interview schedules and at times specifically discussing an area of the Medicine Wheel. The themes addressed by the groups were transcribed, so the topics the students covered in each session were reported.

I started the individual interviews in May 1997 and ran the first focus group in June, 1997. I was hoping to have them completed by September, 1997. This did not occur because of the lack of available student volunteers during the spring and summer sessions at the university. This time frame was amended to include the fall and winter of 1997 so I was able to contact an adequate pool of students to participate with this assessment. It worked well in the regular school year.

**Major constraints in data collection were:**

These are six major constraints I experienced while doing this assessment:

1) It was difficult to obtain volunteers for the assessment when the students had exams or major papers due such as at midterm or end of term.

2) It took time to establish trust with the students prior to my asking them to participate in the assessment. Some of them did not want to be a part of a study about Indians again. I had to spend time with them to make it more comfortable for us to communicate with one another.

3) It is important to have a computer. When I first started this work I did not own one and it was very difficult to get the work done. I had to use the computer at the university or from other sources. This meant that I had to do it when the computer was available and not on my own time. I learned that almost every computer I used had its own particular program. The programs were all different from one another, which had me in crisis many times till I could finally purchase one myself.

4) I did have a hard time getting enough students to volunteer. The advertising for the students could have been done in a broader context. I could have contacted post-secondary Band offices or education authorities. There could have been more advertising done through the TV or the newspaper.

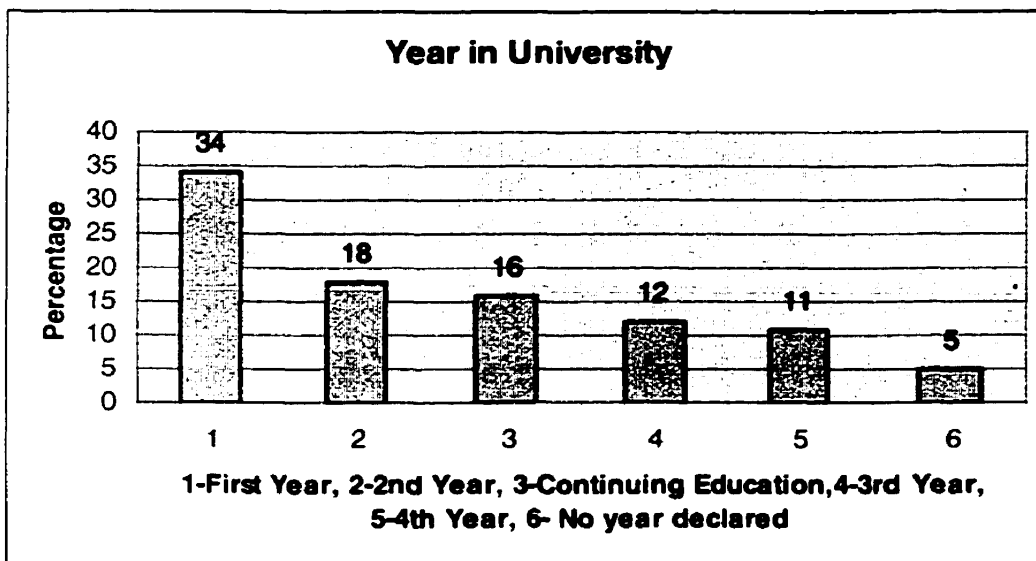
5) The groups were better for the students as this gave them an opportunity to share experiences. The individual interviews were good but they often brought forward direct answers with little change in the how they found new ideas about how to cope with university.

6) There was more Treaty Status students in this assessment. It would be good to see another needs assessment, for example, about Metis students only.



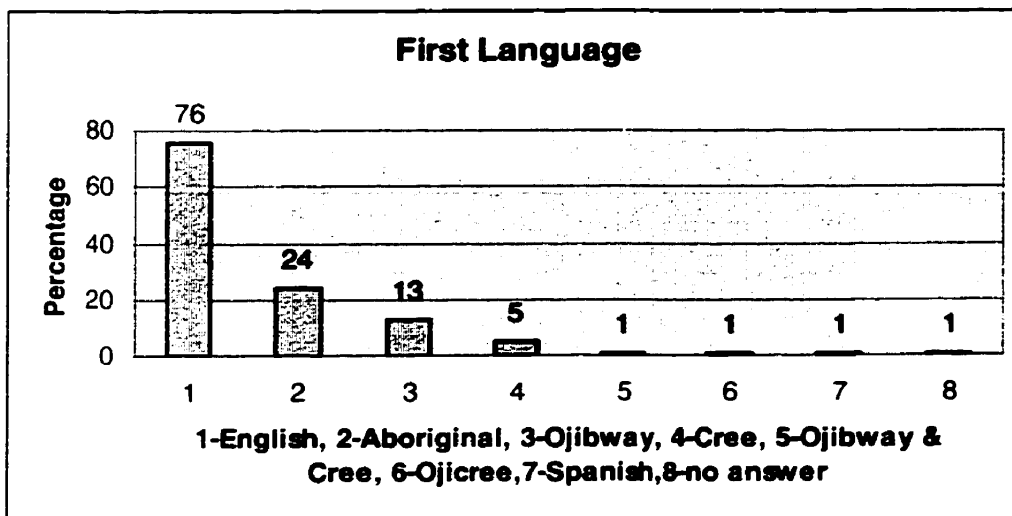
## Chapter 4 Findings of the Study

This segment is a summary of the details collected from the interview schedule. It has been divided into five sections: the first is demographic information. Then using the *Medicine Wheel* components to examine student life the next four sections are titled: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual data. All participants, including the focus group participants completed the demographic section of the interview schedule for this assessment. The schedule was then used as a tool for choosing topics in the focus group discussions. Only the people involved in the individual sessions completed the whole interview schedule.



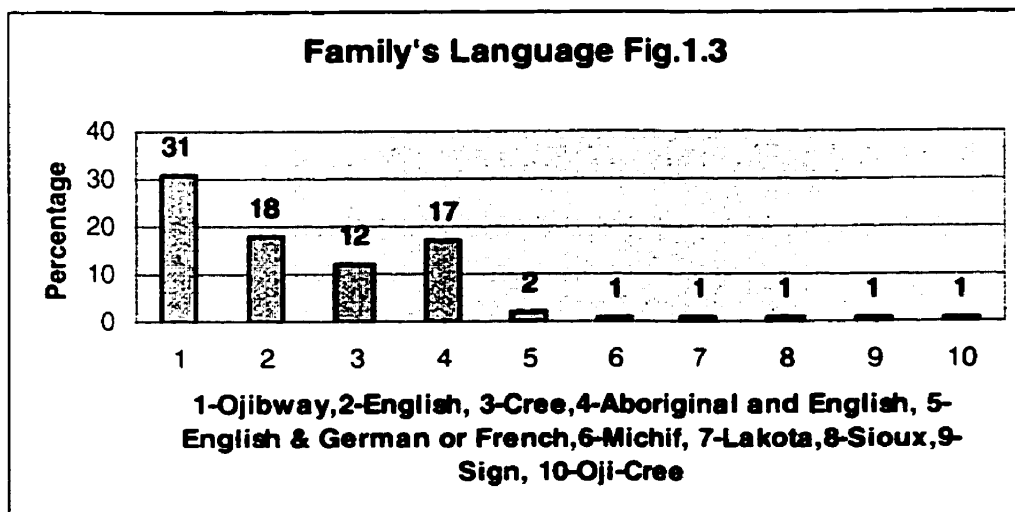
There were 79 responses to the question what year in University are you in.

There were 34% in first year university, 18% in second year, 12% in their third year and 11% in the fourth year. 16% who were in a Continuing Education Program and 5% who were unknown, not declaring their year.



There were 81 responses to the question what is your first language.

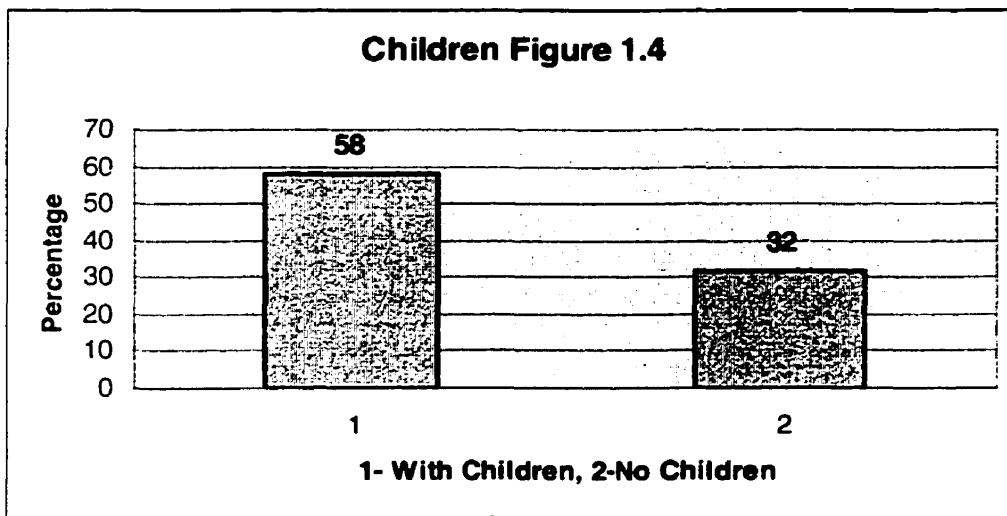
76 % of these students stated that English was their first language. 24 % students stated in general they use an Aboriginal language as their first language. 13 % stated that they had Ojibway or Saulteaux as their first language; 5 % stated they spoke Cree as their first language and 1% stated Ojibway / Cree; 1% stated Oji-Cree;; 1% spoke Spanish as his first language. 1% of the students had no answer to this question.



There were 82 responses to the question what is your family's language. 31% were Ojibway; 18% were English; 12% were Cree; 17% were Aboriginal and English mixed; 2% was English mixed with French or German; 1% Michif; 1% Lakota; 1% Sioux; 1% Sign Language; 1% Oji-Cree. 62 % of these students stated that their family's language was another language other than English. 57 % of the languages were an Aboriginal language or a mix of English and an Aboriginal language.

The average age of these students was 26 years old. 10 of these students were 28 years old. The youngest student was 20 years old. The oldest student was 52 years old. There were 82 responses to the question of what was their gender. There was 39 % male student in this needs assessment. 59% were female students. There were 3 % who did not state their gender.

There were 82 respondents to this question of whether the students were single parents. 25 % were single parents. 25 % answered no. 25 % stated that this question was not applicable. 1% stated they were married. 2 % stated they had shared custody of their children.



There were 82 responses to the question: Do you have children? 38 % of the students stated they had no children. 52 % of the total number stated that they had children. 13 % had one child. 18 % stated they had 2 children. 3 % had 3

children. 1 % of the students respectively had 4, 5 and 6 children. 8 % of the students gave no answer to this question.

This question gave further information about students with children. There was more success in identifying parents noted by the increased number of people who answered this question. It shows that approximately half of these students have children. More people are juggling the student and parenting role.

## **Chart B**

### **Small, Medium, Large Community**

#### **17 - answered small size community**

- 2 - small, 200 people
- 1 - small, 250 people
- 1- small, 300 people
- 1- small, under 2000
- 1- small, 10,000
- 1- small, 6-7000 people.
- 1- small, 6000 people

#### **15- answered medium size community**

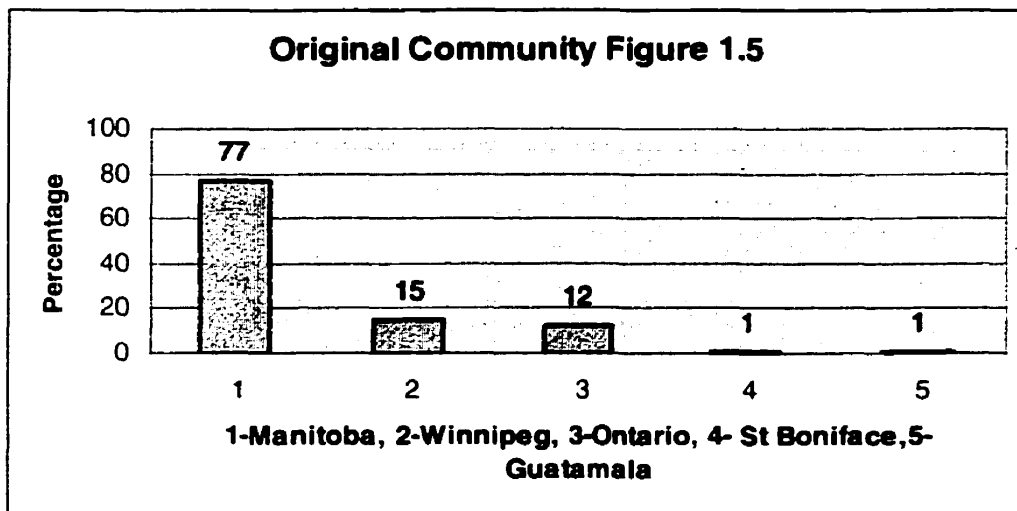
- 1- medium, 2000 people
- 1- medium, 600-700 people
- 1- medium, 3400 people
- 1- medium, 3000 off/ 3000 on reserve
- 1- medium, 600 people
- 1- medium, 3400 people

#### **17 answered large size community**

- 2- large, over 1000 people
- 1- Large, 2200 people
- 1- Large, 3000 plus
- 1- Large, 3000 people
- 1- Large, 3500+ people
- 1- large, 3700 people
- 1- Large, 4000 people
- 4- Large, 5000 people
- 1- Large, 5500-6500 people
- 1- Large, 10,000 people
- 1- Large, 600,000 people
- 1- very large
- Unknown
- 6 no answers
- ? 800 people

See the Chart B:

There were 82 responses to the question are you from a small, medium or large community. The responses of the size of their community may reflect the differences in where they are living now versus where they have come from in order to attend school. Many of the students gave their personal definition of what is a small, medium or large community. 30 % of the students stated they came from a small community; 23 % stated they came from a medium size community; and 33 % stated they came from a large community. 1% stated he came from a very large community. 1-% answer was there were 800 people in the community but they did not know what size it is. There were 7% of the students who gave no answer to this question.



There were 82 responses to the question. What was your original community?

The students did respond with names of communities but there were many names to be noted. There were 77 % of the students from Manitoba. 15 % of the

students resided in Winnipeg. 12 % of the students were Ontario students. 1% was from St. Boniface, which is part of the city of Winnipeg. 1% was from Guatamala.

There were 67 responses to the question how long have you lived in Winnipeg. The average time living in Winnipeg was 12 years. The least amount of time was 1 month. 16% of the students lived in Winnipeg under one year. The range of years was from 1 to 40 years. The largest amount of years was 40. There was 1 % students who stated they lived in and out of Winnipeg for 3 years. There were 3% students stated they lived in and out of the city for 8 years. There were 12% students who lived in Winnipeg for 4 years. This was the most predomonant time that the students stated they lived in Winnipeg. There were 4% students who lived in Winnipeg for: 2 years/ 3 years/ 10 years/ 12 years/ 19 years/ 20 years and / 27 years respectively. This previous statement was the largest trend noted in this information.

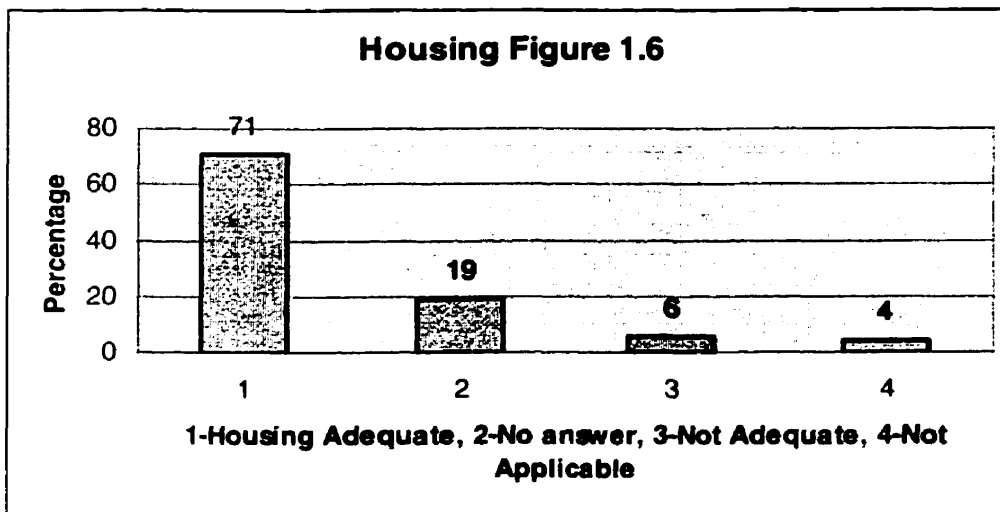
There were 52 responses to how long has it been since you left your community. 19% of the students left their communities under 1 year ago. The range in time the students left their communities was from 1.5 to 40 years ago. The average time the students left their communities was 11 years. There were 9% students who had left their communities for 15 years. This was the largest concentration of students with the same stated time. There were 5% of the students who left their communities: 4 years ago/ 12 years ago and / 20 years ago respectively. This was the next largest trend, which was noted in this data. 5% of the students stated they still lived in their home communities.

## Findings of Students' Needs Physical Data

**A general question was asked first. Are your physical needs being met in area such as housing, clothing, utilities, food, healthcare, dental care, daycare, transportation, glasses, recreational activities so that you are able to do your studies?**

There were 58 responses.

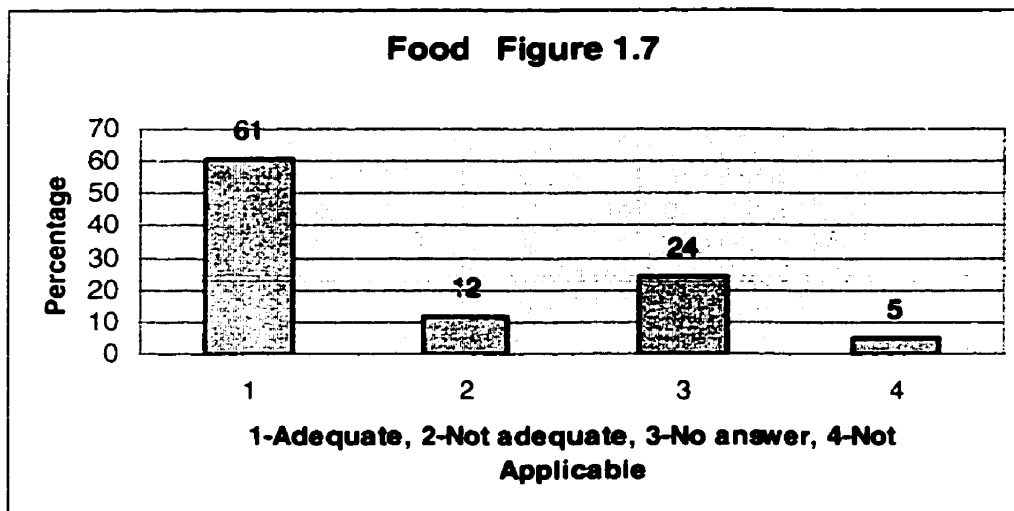
This is a general question about physical needs. 46 % of the students stated these needs were met. 17% stated their needs were not met but upon examination of the detailed questions it can be seen that some of the needs for students are fulfilled. 34 % gave no answer and 3% thought the question was not applicable. This is a good question to obtain a snapshot picture of how the students feel their needs are met for this area.



59 students responded to the question. Is your housing adequate? 71% stated their housing was adequate; 19 % gave no answer; 6% stated no and 4 % stated the question was not applicable. The problems with housing cited were that: there needs to be more subsidized housing; that housing is expensive for single

people living alone and that they need to share housing in order to be able to afford it; there needs to be more less expensive housing closer to the university; and that housing is sometimes difficult to find.

**Utilities:** Utilities coincided with the responses with the housing question. There were 59 responses. 71 % stated yes. 6% stated no. 19% had no answer and 3% stated this was not applicable. It could be suggested that often utilities are included with the rent therefore the answers may be remarkably similar. I have noted that not all answers fall exactly in line with the housing responses but the numbers are equal. The problem with utilities are that when the student does have to pay for them they are very expensive and therefore students may find it more beneficial to have utilities included with their rent as much as possible.



61 % of the 59 students who responded stated that their food requirements are adequate. 12 % stated their food requirements were not adequate. 24% gave no answer and 5 % felt the question was not applicable. 12 % is a large percentage of students who may not be getting their food needs met. Food is a primary need to sustain life and it is a shocking result that only 61 % of these students state that their food needs are met. Students have stated that they have cut down on their number of daily meals; used food banks in order to obtain enough food; reduced the quality of their diets i.e. omitted vegetables because they are seen



as too expensive and when times are financially harder the student decreases the food purchased in order to survive.

61 % of the 59 students responded that health care provisions were adequate. This may be because healthcare is primarily provincially funded. Health care for First Nations people also includes uninsured health benefits. 12 % of the students stated health care provisions are not adequate. 24 % have no answer and 3 % state that this question is not applicable.

61 % of these 58 students stated that their dental care was adequate. This coincides with their statements that their Treaty Status provides for their dental care although there has been a decrease from biyearly exams to once a year exams for First Nation people. 8 % stated that dental care was not adequate because of the cost of dental care. There are sparse resources for low-income people to obtain dental. One student stated "that this was part of expenses which were not included in a Canada Student loan budget." 26% gave no answer and 3 % answered that it was not applicable. If there are very few resources for dental care then this could reflect the no answers, as this area is not considered as necessary in the student's budget.

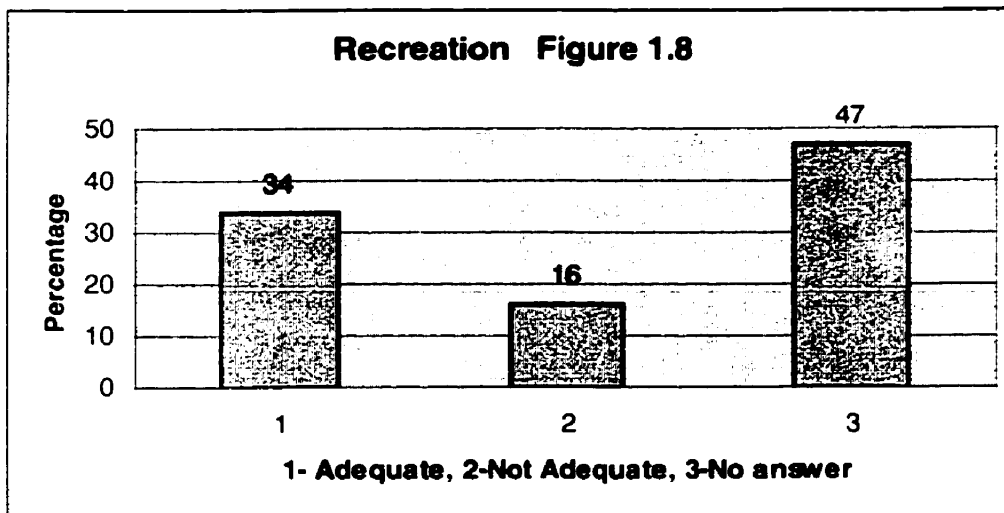
57 % of these 59 students stated that their coverage for glasses was adequate. 15 % stated no. 24% gave no answer. Students who had Treaty Status stated that their needs for glasses were covered by Medical Services. There was a student who stated that the two-year waiting period before being eligible for new glasses was too long. There was a student who had Treaty Status but her children did not and therefore it was an additional expense to pay for the children's glasses. Not all students wear glasses and this may account for the no answer or not applicable responses.

27 % of these 58 students stated daycare was adequate. 8% of the students said it was not. There were 24 % no answer and 41 % not applicable. There may be a high number of not applicable answers due to the fact that many of the students I spoke to were younger with no children.

53 % of these 58 students stated that their clothing needs were adequate. 14 % stated no. 27 % had no answer and 5 % stated this was not applicable. In this area students often stated that clothing was expensive and that most of their

shopping was done in second hand stores. They stated it was hard to keep up with the expenses of children's clothing as they grew.

55 % of these students stated that their transportation was adequate. 15 % stated it was not adequate. Two students stated they lost their cars due to financial difficulties while in school. Some of the students found that purchasing bus passes to attend school was expensive. If a single parent had to buy her children's bus pass then that was an additional burden. 27 % had no answer and 5% stated that this question was not applicable. 27 % had no answer. The not applicable response may be due to the fact that these students live in residence on campus.



34% of these 56 students stated that recreation was adequate. 16% stated it was not adequate. There were 47% who had no answer.

64 % of the students were Band Sponsored, 30 % had part-time or full time employment and 14 % were attending university with Canada Student Loans. 64 % coincides with the percentage of students who stated they had come from a First Nation community. Some of the students who had Canada

Student Loans also stated that they were working in order to supplement their incomes. In this sample there is approximately 35 % of Aboriginal students who had income sources other than Band Sponsorship. These students may be Metis, non-status people or sometimes Treaty Status students who did not obtain Band Sponsorship.

There were 55 responses as to whether they had enough money to live on. 32 % of the students stated that their source of income was enough to live on. 58 % stated it was not. 5% gave no answer. There is a large portion of students struggling financially. There is not enough money for food or healthy food; not enough money for transportation; for clothing; for utilities; for recreation; for prescriptions. There are bill collectors who are harassing the students at times. The students make hard decisions over which area they will cut on a day to day basis.

There were 56 responses to whether the students needed assistance with finances. 48 % stated they required assistance. The type of assistance would be showing the students how to access emergency student loans, Canada Student Loans, possibly learning how to obtain money from a bank or approaching their Band. This is almost half the students, which may reflect the need for increased support. They did not have enough income to deal with daily expenses. 26 % stated they required no assistance. 21 % had no answer to this area. 3 % stated this question was not applicable.

There were 52 responses as to who assisted students with finances. 9% were assisted by family, 3% by the Aboriginal Student Center, 3% were helped by an ACCESS Counselor, 1% by the ACCESS Student Association, 1% Secretary at the Education Authority 1% stated they asked but the Band wouldn't

help, 1% was afraid to ask for assistance, 1% stated they didn't ask because it was too much hassle. 36% stated this was not applicable and 32% no answer to this question. In the previous section 48 % of the students stated they required financial assistance and in this area 20% of the students were assisted to obtain the financial support. This may mean that the remainder or 28 % sought out the support themselves or it may mean that there is a need for increased help in this area. 9% of families assisted the students in this area. The Aboriginal Student Center and ACCESS counselors respectively assisted 3% of these students to obtain increased financial support. The students would receive cash from their family and possibly a loan from the ACCESS Student Association. The Aboriginal Student Center & the ACCESS counselor would help them to obtain emergency student loans.

### **Findings of Students' Needs**

#### **Mental Data**

##### **Question: Were you adequately prepared to enter University?**

From a sample of 62 responses in general, 62 % of the students stated they were adequately prepared to enter University. This means the programs that assisted them to make their initial transition to university. 16 % stated they were not adequately prepared to enter university and 17 % gave no answer. Some of the students stated that they were not prepared at first when they entered university but received support from various areas after they were attending university.

**The next section will discuss where the students received their preparation and the programs, which they felt, were effective to prepare them for university.**

**These students felt they were adequately prepared for University:**

17% students through ACCESS staff or the ACCESS Program.

13% through faculty staff such as advisors, supervisors and in one example the Dean of a faculty assisted the student.

8% used the Aboriginal Student Center.

5% the Student Learning Center

5% stated they used counselors.

3 % stated that generally that university supports assisted them.

49% stated they were not adequately prepared for university

**Did you have adequate information to choose courses?**

There were 63 responses

In general 58 % of the students stated they received adequate information about how to chooses courses. 25 % stated they did not receive adequate information.

1 % gave a yes and no answer. 11 % gave no answer to this question. and 3% stated that this question was not applicable.

**Who provided Course Information?**

**Common Themes: This is a list of where students received their assistance for obtaining course information.**

There were 68 students who answered and they were allowed to give more than one response.

14% ACCESS Program or Staff which includes the Special Pre-medical Studies Program

11% Faculty Staff Members

10% Aboriginal Student Center

6% Learning Assistance Center

4% an Advisor

3% Counselors

3% Previous Students

3% self

3% answered not applicable

3% University  
3% University Calendar  
3% pamphlets  
1% Music has required courses  
1% Employer  
1% Career Symposium  
1% Tutor in Toronto  
1% His father assisted in first year  
1% A friend  
1% School Board  
22% No answers

**Students who required help with reading.**

There were 64 responses to this question. In general, 23 % responded that they required assistance with reading. 59 % responded that they required no assistance with reading. 18% gave no answer.

**The areas that assisted the students with reading:**

4% the Learning Resource Center.  
4% Access Counselors or Access tutors.  
3% professors.  
3% Learning Resource Center.  
1% students stated they were assisted by each of the following areas respectively: by an Academic advisor: the Aboriginal Student Center: friends: and the Introduction to University Course.

**Who helped with study and time management skills?**

There were 64 responses to this question:  
21 % taught themselves.  
15% students learned time & management skills through the Access program counselors, director and their orientation.  
9% through the Introduction to University course.  
4% Learning Resource Center.  
3% Aboriginal Student Center.

3% counselors.

3% professors.

18% of the students stated they learned time and management skills through: Residence Classes; study skills workshop; took a pre-university course; Previous life skills course; Read a book; Winnipeg Education Center; Adult Education; past Instructor and other students; high school teachers; mom; spouse; and through school. 13% gave no answer to this area.

### **Did you take the Introduction to University Course?**

There were 63 responses to this question. 43 % stated they took the Introduction to University Course. 30 % stated they didn't take the course. 27 % stated the question was not applicable.

## **Findings of Students' Needs**

### **Emotional Data**

#### **Who are your supports outside of school?**

77 % of this sample of 61 students used family and friends for support. 11 % used a counselor. 5 % of the students relied on themselves. 3 % of the students relied on each of the following areas for support: Great Spirit or God: or agency support. 11 % used other areas for support such as a daycare: cultural ways: colleagues: Manitoba Indian Education Counselor: "his student group": Ikwe Women's Shelter: Red Willow Lodge. 11% stated they relied on no one. 5% used the Great Spirit or God: "my cultural ways": the Ikwe Women's Shelter and Red Willow Lodge were areas that sustained them.

#### **Who are supports within the University?**

There were 61 student responses. 76% of these students stated they had supports within the university. The students could give more than one answer in this section.

24 % of these students used the Aboriginal Student Center.

14 % used other students for support.

14 % used the Access Program.

5 % used counselors.

3 % of the students used the Learning Resource Center or Elders & the Cultural Support Therapist

11 % stated they had no one

13% had no response to this question

16 % of the students used support from other areas such as: the Student Resource Center; Band Counselor; other Anishinabe people; acquaintances at the University; gym/library; Peer Advisor Center; Aboriginal Business Education Program staff; one stated the question was not applicable but, was aware he could go to Student Services if necessary.

### **Do you have family obligations?**

In this sample of 61 students 65 % stated yes they have family obligations. 36 % have obligations to their children. 16 % to partners. 8 % to parents or grandparents. 4% to nieces and nephews. 1 % to her creditors, bank and utilities. 21 % stated that they had no family obligations. 14% gave no answer.

### **Who depends upon you for support?**

There were 59 responses 66% had other people who were dependent upon them. 40% had partners, children other family members who depended on them for support. 12% answered nobody. 6% had friends who depended upon them. 8% stated others in general depended on them.



## Where would you get help in a crisis?

Please note the respondents were allowed to give more than one answer and this is the result of their responses.

25 % would get help from their families in a crisis.

17 % used other supports such as: cultural support therapist;

16 % used the Aboriginal Student Center

16 % used the support of friends in a crisis.

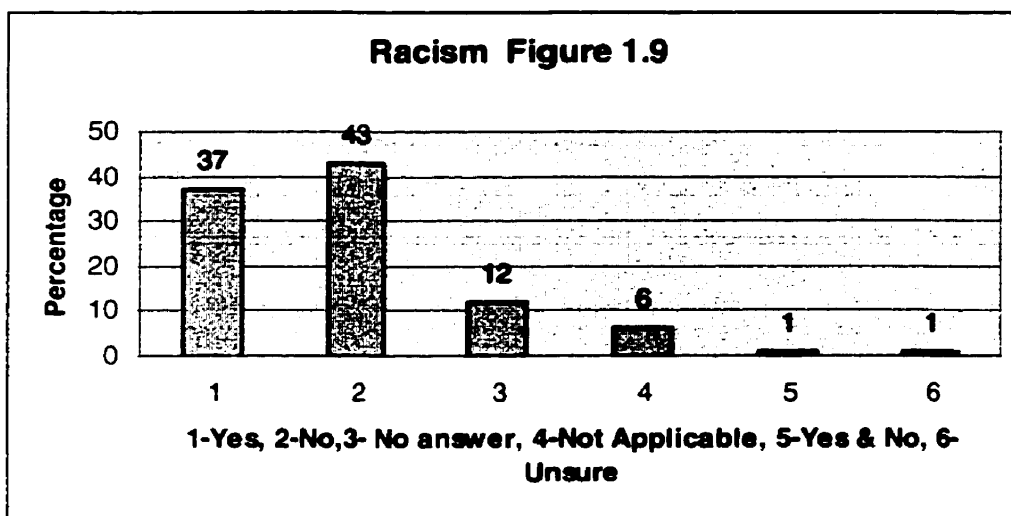
15 % used the Access Program staff for support in a crisis.

13 % had no answer to this question

11 % used a counselor.

6 % used an academic advisor.

3 % used instructors; Education Counselors / Band; or an Elder.



37 % of this sample of 62 students experienced racism at the University of Manitoba. 43 % of the students stated they did not experience racism at the University. 12 % gave no answer. 1 % stated yes and no. 1 % stated he was unsure. 6 % stated that the question was not applicable. This displays there is racism experienced by Aboriginal students at the University of Manitoba.

### The students experienced Racism in the following contexts.

There were 59 responses to this question.

32 % of this sample of students gave examples of where they experienced racism at the University.

**Here is a list of where they experienced it:**

6 % from other students in the class.

5 % the Manitoban Newspaper/ University Newspaper.

3 % saw racist graffiti in the washrooms.

1 % responded: I am the only Aboriginal in my faculty of 100 people;

1% stated you don't really notice or care to notice it anymore;

1 % stated no help was required.

17 % of the students had other responses such as:

"I always am explaining that I am Metis and what that means"; in a course; from an English teacher; teachers in general; in the university book store and at Wise Guys Lounge; in the Student Lounge; "to my face"; "in general; people look down on me"; " from Native students, not being Indian enough"; " As a white looking Native person people are unaware I am Native". 28 % of the students gave no answer and 23 % stated that the question was not applicable.

5 % of these 59 students received help from the Aboriginal Student Center to deal with racism. 12 % of these students received help from the following areas: professor; other co-workers; student council; counselors; other students; friends; I would go to student council or instructor.

10 % of the students had the following responses:

The students used a variety of ways to deal with racism:

"I've learned how to accept" ( passive acceptance);

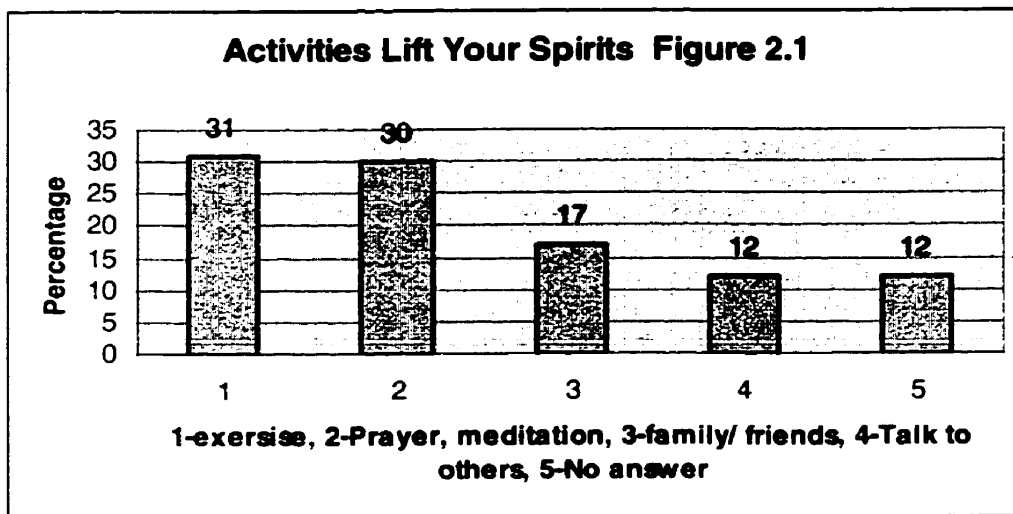
nobody, "I haven't told anybody" (This may be due to not knowing where to obtain help);"No help, I quit the course" ( again trying to find the resources about where to deal with such matters may be difficult); "No one, the situation wasn't dealt with." ( keeping the experience to yourself may seem simpler than dealing with confrontation of the situation)

2% responded with no help was needed.

35 % no answer; 25 % not applicable

Only a small amount of these students received support to deal with concerns about racism. The Aboriginal Student Center has been an important area to get support. I am concerned about the students who quit their course; haven't told anyone or found it better to blend in so that they may survive in this type of environment.

**Findings of Students Needs  
Spiritual Data**



**What activities lift your spirits?**

63 students responded to this question. 88 % of the students gave a variety of positive ways they lifted their spirits. They were allowed to give more than one answer. The various ways were: 31 % used exercise or sports: 30 % of the students used prayers, meditation, Elders etc. to lift their spirits:

17 % sought the support of family or friends:12 % state that talking to others helps them. This is mainly done with friends but some identified university supports like the Aboriginal Student Center or their university advisor. 7 % of the

students used music: 1% of the students played board games:12 % of the students gave no answer to this question.

### **What makes you stay in school?**

#### **Commons Themes**

49 % of these students gave positive reasons as to what made them stay in school. 20 % of these students stay in school because they have family and friends who are supportive of them. 9 % have goals of wanting further education. 7 % of the students feel that they want to be role models for their children, for other family members and for their community. 7 % want a better life. They've had jobs they didn't like and wanted to make changes to their lifestyle. 3 % identified that they had a vision and that was why they stayed in school. 3% wanted a university degree. 12 % of the students gave no answer.

### **Do you have a spiritual community at the University of Manitoba?**

53 students responded to this question. 30 % of the students stated they have a spiritual community at the University of Manitoba. 38 % stated that they had no community at the university.19 % had no answer and 13 % thought that it was not applicable.

### **Do you have a spiritual community off campus?**

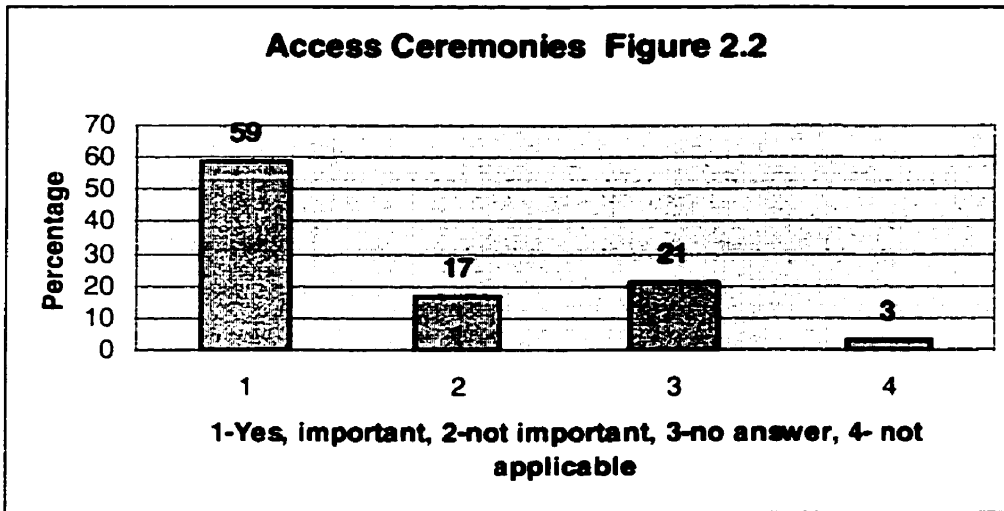
53 students responded to this question.

60 % of the students responded to this question. 36 % of these students answered yes. They have a spiritual community off campus. 26 % stated no, they do not have a community off campus. 38 % gave no answer.

### **Would you share what you spiritual community is?**

There were 45 responses to this question.

33 % were related to Traditional Teachings, 11% answers were church, 36% stated the question was not applicable or gave no answer



**Is it important for you to access Ceremonies, Sacred Medicines and Elders?**

From this sample, 59 % of the students stated that Ceremonies, Sacred Medicines and Elders are important to them. This clearly shows a connection to Traditional ways for these students. 17% stated that these ceremonies etc. were not important. There was 21 % with no answer and 3 % said it was not applicable.

## **Focus Group Reports**

There were five focus groups for this assessment. The sessions were audio taped. I used the interview schedule and the Medicine Wheel to ask questions of the participants. The Medicine Wheel examines the spiritual, emotional, physical and mental aspects of student life. Every group started with an introduction, a description of the purpose of the group, and an explanation that we would use the Medicine Wheel to examine student needs. The students all completed a consent form prior to participation in the sessions. I summarized the information collected here in terms of themes noted as this was the most concise way of noting information received from the participants. The group information was different from the individual interviews in that I was able to obtain more qualitative information from the students. The groups were very informative and often reflected the information received from the interview schedule information. The students often commented that they enjoyed the groups and felt support and decreased isolation after their participation in the session.

### **The May 21, 1997 Group**

#### **Themes noted were:**

- The students spoke about financial issues such as money not being there for tuition fees. This decreased their choices of courses they could take.
- They spoke of the high expense of housing
- They mentioned the high cost of childcare.

- There were also problems of finding daycare that was close to the parent's home or near the university. This type of location would help decrease the transport problems with very young children.
- The Access program is seen as a good area of emotional support.

**September 3,1997**

**The themes noted were:**

- Financial stress.
- Having to deal with racism while renting an apartment from a lady.
- It is hard to live with the limited amount received from the band.
- Required emotional support due to a death in the family.

**Other areas discussed:**

- Emotional support was received from the ACCESS Program and family.
- Buying clothes at a second hand store.
- Buying a university recreation pass at a reduced student rate.

**September 26, 1997**

- There is discussion of issues that affect Mature Students.

**The themes noted were:**

- It is difficult for mature older students to ask directions from young professors.
- There are problems about how to deal with school after being out of school for a long time. Problems such as not recalling information learned in high school.
- Mature students are told that there is a high drop out rate for them. This is seen as discouraging. There was the stereotype that Indians didn't go to school, which needs to be dealt with.

**Other areas discussed:**

- The ACCESS advisors are good for support.

- Some of the students thought that having a sharing circle would help the students to deal with issues related to school.
- More support is needed when first starting university to increase the chance of a good GPA.
- Aboriginal university programs are good. It makes the students more comfortable and it also gives them a community at the university.
- The Medicine Wheel teaching helps to keep focused on their goals.
- There was a discussion about why they came to school. The areas the students noted were job dissatisfaction limited choices of employment and leading an unproductive life. A degree gives them the qualifications to do a job.
- Role models were discussed. Some students stated there was lack of them, and some of them stated they have family and friends who are role models.

**September 27th, 1997**

**The themes noted were:**

- Racism: nobody wants to sit beside you in class and a student comments we are still being thought of as savages.
- There are few Aboriginal students with them in courses.
- They have little income.
- The topic of physical activity or exercise is discussed. This is hard to do with young students as a mature student. There is a problem with the expense of doing things.
- When nutrition was discussed the students note there is too much junk food on campus and that you must bring your own lunch if you want something nutritious.
- There is little support for childcare or daycare. There needs to be an increase in support for parents.



- There are feelings of isolation especially when coming from another province or from a reserve.
- There was a need for more direction about which courses to take.
- There was problem finding suitable parking.
- There was a request to have more activities with the Aboriginal Student Association.

**Other areas discussed:**

- The students mention church was a comfortable way of dealing with spirituality.
- Positive aspects of Access Special Premedical Studies Program were the extended chemistry, the tutors and the academic counselors.
- There is the greatest number of Aboriginal graduates from medical school in the ACCESS Special Pre-Medical: Studies.

**October 17,1997: This was a group of women only.**

**Themes noted in this group were:**

- There are impersonal feelings at the university not much individuality is allowed.
- More culture would benefit everybody Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.
- The size of the university is overwhelming when a student comes from a small community.
- The registration guide is complicated and difficult to work with.
- There was a problem of getting funding cleared at the last minute. This decreases the choice of courses for the students.
- Some husbands are not supportive due to roles changing when a woman attends university. This makes it difficult for the woman to attend school.
- There is no time or money for recreational activities.

- **White people are different and act different. The students say they have difficulty in being themselves with them. There is more comfort with other Aboriginal people.**
- **A student comments there are few Native students in the classes.**
- **Non-Aboriginals allow you to use culture and even be an Indian expert sometimes but only if they can benefit. They also have control of the funding when it comes to programs.**

**Other topics discussed:**

- **Students could help other students to choose courses.**
- **Students are comfortable in the Aboriginal student lounge.**
- **One student has come from another city and has left her child there with parents to go to school. This is a sacrifice for her to attend university.**
- **A student comments she sometimes shops to relieve stress.**
- **Students eat Kraft Dinner in order to deal with the limited income they have to live on.**

## **Chapter 5**

### **Analysis**

This is an analysis of the demographic, physical, mental, emotional and spiritual data collected through this needs assessment process. I have determined the primary themes, which made strong impressions in order to complete this section. While there are definitely more areas which can be presented here, I have chosen to emphasize, and reiterate, the information found most enlightening.

#### **Demographic**

##### **Language:**

The most interesting fact from this section was about language. Many of the students identified their family's language as an Aboriginal language. This meant that the residential schools were unsuccessful in eliminating the peoples' original language and many students are bilingual. The three main languages noted were Ojibway, Cree and Oji-Cree. In another question many students identified English as the language of usage. This became their first language because they have had to use it in order to function outside of their homes and communities.

Another reason may be that in order to be successful in university and to be eligible for entry into post-secondary education a person must be proficient in English, the language of entry into post-secondary education.

##### **Age of Students:**

A very high percentage of them were Mature students, which is over 22 years of age. Many of the students had dropped out of high school and came to an

academic institution later in life with less formal educational experience. This lack of education experiences sometimes led to increased frustration as they may have insufficient skills to adapt to university. For instance, the students may be entering with adult education courses, a General Education Diploma or education from the reserve, which can be very different from urban high school preparation. Some stated others discouraged them about having goals of pursuing post-secondary education. To illustrate students agreed in the focus groups that “There was the stereotype that Indians didn’t go to school from non-Aboriginal people.” Sometimes their own families may dissuade them from pursuing further education because it will mean leaving their community and family. Other students expressed difficulty in coming to a primarily European educational institution. Many stated they often felt uncomfortable being a small population of Aboriginal students at university.

**Areas of Residence:**

The other area I noted in this section was that the majority of the students came from rural communities to Winnipeg to attend university. Although starting post-secondary education is an exciting time it is difficult for them to leave friends, family, community and familiar surroundings to come to school. These are the losses the students must deal with. It leads to the student feeling isolated, disorientated and sometimes depressed. At the same time they must make important decisions about establishing themselves in Winnipeg. They often lack the finances to come to the city sooner in order to make this transition smoother and to allow themselves time to deal with the emotions caused by change.

Another complication is because they are often mature students they not only have to adjust themselves but also assist their children in the same process. They are often not given very much time to make these changes due to funding considerations. They often have to find housing, childcare and make their way around in an unfamiliar community within a couple of weeks. These types of problems are particularly more stressful for first year students. The students in the later years still must deal with similar situations but they have already had some time to construct supports that will see them continuing with university.

### **Physical**

#### **In General:**

The impact of living on a very limited income was reflected in all the answers in this section. Financial stress caused strain on everything the students had to deal with from the food they ate, housing and transportation. The students must live on an income, which is comparable to living on social assistance and sometimes even less. The rates for student allowances for Treaty Status people have not changed in the last ten years. Students who must use Canada Student Loans for funding also must live in severe poverty. This is the penalty they pay for pursuing post-secondary education.

Frequently their families are also poor and unable to give them financial assistance.

#### **Health Care, Dental Care and Glasses:**

Aboriginal students are often unable to pay for proper dental care, glasses and prescriptions especially if they do not have Treaty Status. Students with limited

financial aide are at risk to ignore health and dental problems. They are often not able to afford prescriptions in order to deal with illness. These problems can develop into serious health risks for them as well as compromising their education. It can mean that they are likely to miss classes because of problems of this nature and these problems can last longer if they do not have the proper treatment. The same sorts of problems can occur if the student has dental problems. Respondents noted that there are not enough services for low-income people to receive assistance in these areas or if such services exist they don't know about them. If they do go to see a dentist even time payments cause more strain on an already exhausted income.

Students with Treaty Status are also affected as cutbacks to medical services are being made. There are limitations on the types of medications that medical service will allow. Dental care is also compromised for the students as the cutbacks to regular check ups and care is done on an annual instead of a bi-annual status. Even approval for emergency dental care involves waiting for extended periods. It is also becoming increasingly difficult to obtain services when approval takes a long time or applications involve more complicated processes.

**Food:**

The students noted that they could only afford very inexpensive food due to their limited budgets. The types of foods they eat are of poorer quality and exclude healthy essentials such as fruits and vegetables. Some of the students reported that they even decrease the number of meals they have in a day in order to

lessen expenses. They also remarked that there is not enough inexpensive nutritious food available on campus. These kinds of dietary restrictions can take a toll on the general well being of a person. This has a negative impact on their health and ability to carry out their activities in their lives. This includes the ability to study. Some students resort to the use of a food bank in order to cope. It helps but they still have the problem of trying to ensure stable proper nutrition.

Students are often sacrificing their own and their children's health while they attend university. Some students claim they are even starved out of university, which means they cannot obtain the proper nutrition to carry on with their studies. Consequently they quit university.

#### **Housing:**

First year students can have the most difficulty in finding housing. Some of the obstacles they deal with are: not knowing the city, having limited income and because they usually come to the city mid- August to start school in September they are forced to make decisions about housing under extreme pressure. This often leads to some undesirable choices. When the students obtain subsidized housing then that is very helpful but they often have to wait for a few months before this is available to them. Rental subsidy is often required, as many of them are Mature students with children and the cost of housing for a family can be quite expensive. If a student has expensive housing it can exhaust an already very limited income. Single students also have a continuous problem of housing, as there are no subsidy programs for them. They often struggle to find low-cost

housing or good roommates. Finding another student to share accommodations when you don't know anyone can be an intimidating proposition.

### **Mental**

Positive remarks have been made about the ACCESS Program and the Mature Student orientations. They were seen as being very helpful to the students. The ACCESS Program orientation in particular is two weeks in length and it assists the students to address the many changes that will affect them as they attend university. It also gives these students time to bond with one another so that they have the beginnings of peer support as well as support from the program staff. The Introduction to University Course has often been seen as invaluable to students. They learn many things such as how to write university papers, improve study and time management skills and how to use the university library. These things are critical in order to be successful in university. Within the first 30 credit hours of university students must also complete the requirements of a written English course and a Mathematics course. These students can have difficulty in these areas because they often lack the high school preparation for entering university particularly if they enroll as Mature students. This means that they have to work harder in order to learn the skills to proficiently write for university level courses. It can be done but it can often take them more time to learn and improve their competence.

### **Emotional:**

A majority of the students used family and friends as support as they attend university.



However, this has been hampered by the fact that their families are often living outside of the city. This can cause increased financial problems for the students, as they must pay for long distance calls or have their families pay for them. Sometimes the students get home sick and they will try to go home for visits, which also increases financial burdens. This is a big strain for first year students in particular before they are able to develop supports in the city. It can also remain an issue in other years for students who want to maintain relationships with friends and family in their home community.

When a student experiences a crisis in their lives they still use their families for support. If they are not readily available then a counselor at the university can be helpful. Many of the students stated the counselors and academic advisors in the ACCESS Program were beneficial. Another area was the Native Student Advisor and the Elder from the Aboriginal Student Center. Students like to have services culturally relevant to them. They like to see people who understand their point of reference especially dealing with a primarily European education system. This type of support allows them to speak about cultural issues more openly, problems they experience with racism and to be able to be involved in cultural events and spiritual practices as they attend university.

Aboriginal students continue to deal with racism in university. They have stated that it was present in a variety of areas. They have dealt with it from fellow students, professors, and view the exclusion of Aboriginal content in many of the courses they take as a form of racism. This exclusion makes it difficult to talk

about their own experiences as they relate to topics discussed in courses. Some students received help to deal with the racism from the Aboriginal Student Center through the Resident Elder and staff of the Center . Some of the saddest comments I noted in this section were when the students just gave up and left a course due to problems of this nature. Racism is also serious when an Aboriginal person feels it necessary to blend in and act as if they are not Aboriginal in order to contend with racism.

### **Spiritual**

Almost one third of the students used sports in order to lift their spirits. They stated that it was expensive to pay for a membership for an exercise club or even for a class. There was an additional cost of childcare while the parent was away for this activity. Some of the students stated they would be willing to have a co-op to reduce expenses in this area. Sometimes the students stated they were just too tired emotionally after studying in order to do this. I think that students could co-operate to decide how to inexpensively exercise together in between classes. Some of the students talked about walking, there could be joint exercising with video instructions and finally all the students could be provided with information about reduced rates for students at exercise facilities such as the YM-YWCA or even at the University of Manitoba.

Almost half of the students stated they had a spiritual community. Two-thirds of the students stated that Traditional Ways are important to them, therefore this is important to have on campus. Traditional ways include having an Elder present to speak to and support them. They require access to the

Sacred Medicines such as sweetgrass, cedar, sage and tobacco for personal and group ceremonies. There are a variety of Aboriginal groups and the Aboriginal Center has arranged an assortment of people to furnish teachings for the students. Some students enjoy participating in sweat lodge ceremonies and other ceremonies off campus and again the Center has arranged for students to attend such events. There is a graduation Pow Wow every year which takes a tremendous amount of organization. The students, families and communities have enjoyed this magnificent celebration of Aboriginal education. These events and supports have assisted the Aboriginal students to feel more comfortable to attend university. Students should also be provided with information about where pastoral services of other denominations are located on campus. This will ensure they can obtain spiritual support for their particular beliefs.

### **Analysis of the Focus Groups:**

The focus groups reiterated the information I acquired from the interview schedule data.

I have noted the similarities as well as additional facts noted from these sessions.

The students spoke about issues regarding being Mature students. They experienced difficulties such as feeling uneasy about being older than many of their fellow students in class, having to deal with parenting issues, feeling self-conscious about asking for direction from a professor who is sometimes younger than you.

They reconfirmed the housing issues spoken of earlier however an additional problem noted was that they spoke of having to deal with racist

property owners or caretakers. This sometimes prevented them from obtaining an apartment or events of verbal discrimination that they encountered.

The issue of having difficulties in paying for prescriptions and glasses was apparent in the groups. They stated it was compounded when a child needed glasses because there was a need for more repairs or replacements.

They reconfirmed the issues about food however the students also spoke about having to eat a lot of pasta in order to reduce costs in their budget. They were aware this was unhealthy when eaten on a frequent basis.

The students remarked they felt isolated coming from reserves or from other provinces. They often told me how they found the ACCESS Program to be an excellent area of support for them. This included the counselors, tutor support and friendship with fellow students was helpful to them. The students relied on the ACCESS counselors for a tremendous amount of support. This was because they did not have their families close at hand.

They spoke often about having to deal with racism and they confirmed each other's feelings about having to deal with racism. They assisted each other and sought out support to deal with these issues from the Aboriginal Student Center. They reported that it could be very intimidating to have to deal with racism in a class especially when you are only a tiny minority in a classroom. It becomes more problematic if the racial issue is a professor's standpoint. Students can feel very intimidated to assert themselves for fear of being seen as being a challenge to the professor and consequently receiving poorer grades for their course work.

There was a mixture of spiritual affiliations noted. Some followed Traditional Ways and other students were Christian. Many of the students found that having access to Traditional Ways was helpful, even when the students stated they were Christian. They still expressed interest in being informed about these practices.

It became apparent in the groups that they found more comfort in being together as a group of Aboriginal students and that the Aboriginal Programs on campus were helpful to them. The ACCESS Program, the Aboriginal Business Education Program and courses in Native Studies where there were often more Aboriginal students present were locations where the students felt more comfortable. Other areas noted were the Aboriginal Student Center, the Aboriginal Student Lounge and the ACCESS student lounge were places to connect with other Aboriginal Students on campus.

The groups confirmed the financial struggles of the students. I was able to uncover more details about how they struggled with day care and parking issues.

For a brief time in the focus groups I was able to note the bond that they had as Aboriginal Students. The first year students were shy about sharing information in the sessions at first but after the group they stated that it was a good experience to talk with other students. I was able to observe the emotional connections that the students made regarding their experiences at university. I noted their bonding by the students agreeing with one another about their experiences as they shared in the focus groups. At this time some of them were able to share that they did not know enough about the activities of the Aboriginal

Student Center. The activities were clarified for them. I also found that some students did not know about the location of food banks. Some were unaware that they could get a subsidy to exercise at the YM-YWCA.

The issues about having late confirmation for funding came up particularly for those who were band funded. They told me about how their choices for courses were dramatically decreased when funding was late. This was a particularly hazardous event when a student had required courses to take and they missed their registration date because of funds not being available for their courses. It left the students in a troublesome position. This sometimes caused them to miss registration dates for required courses and having to make them up at a later date. It was totally not their fault and they felt powerless and frustrated in dealing with this situation.

Finally, I would like to say that the focus groups were good in the fact that it gave the students an opportunity to meet other students who were having similar experiences. This helped to decrease their feelings of aloneness in their experiences at the university. I believe that it helped to empower them sometimes as other students gave the suggestions about how to deal with issues, which were raised. It also gave me an opportunity to inform students about supports and services within the university as well as in the community.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this assessment will provide preliminary information for post-secondary education at the university level. This information will assist professionals involved in post-secondary education to increase their knowledge of supports, which are essential for Aboriginal students. It was an opportunity for me to get to know many Aboriginal students and I received a more intimate picture of what these students encounter when they attend university. It is important that Aboriginal people continue to have input into Aboriginal education. I was very happy to have done this work. I learned invaluable information about the university system, programs and Aboriginal education. Finally, I hope that this will encourage other Aboriginal students to pursue a graduate degree and to do further research in this area.

#### **My Own Recommendations:**

I have chosen one recommendation from each of the four areas: physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. **Physical** : In this area of most concern is financial. The students often state how they deal with severe poverty and it is a struggle to provide for their basic needs. The student allowances and the Canada Student Loans are not enough for students to support themselves. The financial aid and student allowances should increase taking into account the inflation of costs of housing, food and clothing.

**Mental:** I would like to see the ACCESS model of orientating new students to be considered as a model of orientating all Aboriginal students. I say this because the students often mentioned how helpful this was. Again, we cannot forget the critical struggles of the first year students especially in making their initial transition to university.

**Emotional:** I would like to all the issues about racism dealt with more effectively. I think that it would be good to have a person who deals with racism as a university appointment. He/she could be an ombudsman for Aboriginal students and the other part of their work could be to educate people how to deal with racism. While there is the student advocacy office I don't think that Aboriginal students are comfortable in bringing these types of concerns to non-Aboriginal people.

**Spiritual:** There needs to be a permanent Elder's office similar to the way other religious denominations have on campus. There also needs to be a place for a sacred space for Aboriginal ceremonies. There are buildings and churches on campus for other denominations and the same consideration can be given to Aboriginal people. A model of this in a building can be seen at the Center for Indigenous Environmental Resources here in Winnipeg. Of course in the longer term I would like to see a House of Learning comparable to the one at the University of British Columbia.



## **Implications of the Findings**

These are some of the implications generated by this assessment depicted in significant areas.

- ❖ **Demographically:** There are an increased number of Mature students in the Aboriginal student population. Services need to reflect support for students in this category. Mature students are often parents and who enter university with a variety of educational backgrounds. Specifically there could be programs that are set up for students that are parenting. This can support those that must struggle with this issue.
- ❖ There are many students coming from rural areas to attend university. Recognition of the transitional period from rural to urban settings for these students is of primary importance. This can be supported the way the Access program does it by holding group sessions which validated the losses that the students deal with as they leave their communities to start university while giving them ideas about how they can establish new friendships and other supports in Winnipeg.
- ❖ Many of the students have a bilingual family background. When a student comes from a bilingual family and the language in the home is not English then there will be an adjustment to language used in a post-secondary institution. First, there may be translation issues for example from Ojibway to English. Secondly, there are adjustments to the use of more educated words written and spoken at university. Differences such as these are taken into account when students are from other cultural backgrounds. They are recognized through supports such as the International Center. There are English as a Second Language courses for students

who speak other languages. The implication here is that there is lack of recognition of the language barriers that can effect some Aboriginal students. There needs to be supports provided to Aboriginal people to have English as a Second Language classes. There could also be the Language of the University Classes in order to recognize the different style of communicating at university written and orally. I think that this could be integrated into a program at the Learning Assistance Center.

- **Mental:** There were a large number of students who felt they were not adequately prepared for university. Part of this issue is to be examine how well the student is prepared for university before entry. Red River Community College has testing which assesses whether the students are ready to enter the college. I would suggest this kind of testing done before entry into university. It should be done with all students whether they are Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. It is critical to know whether the applicants have enough skills to successfully start university. This kind of testing is absent for Mature student entry into university and it would ensure that they have the skills to start their post-secondary education.

There is preparation for university done through university programs, which must be considered:

- There are orientations done through the ACCESS Program
- There are Mature Student orientations through the university.

I mentioned these programs in particular as they have been identified as being quite helpful to students in this assessment. Staff that is involved in orienting new

students could examine these orientation models. The areas the students found most helpful could be utilized in future programs in the university for Aboriginal Students. The connotation here is that the students have identified the usefulness of these areas. It is important to make further inquiries and identify the good attributes so that they may be used to support students in improved ways.

- **Physical:** The students are continuously dealing with the issue of poverty. The student allowances are very meager. This affects everything from the food they eat, housing, the lack of exercise and recreation and the burden of childcare costs as they attend school. The implication here is that all these factors cause a great deal of stress on the students as they attend university. Student lobbying for increased funding for student allowances and student loans must continue. The lobbying for attempting to stop the increase in costs of post-secondary education i.e. tuition fees is also important. Parents who will soon have children in university can do this lobbying and others interested in Aboriginal education. People should continue to work together to make the situation better. The Aboriginal communities must continue to work together to demand that they be able to have access to education at all levels. Post-secondary education is important especially for the future of Aboriginal self-government.

- **Emotional:** The students rely primarily on friends and family for support outside of the university, but this is often difficult to continue to do when they come from a rural community to attend university. Therefore students do use the supports of the university because of the decreased availability of their former supports. Attending

university is a stressful time and it causes a person to go through many personal changes. Most of the university programs are at least four years in duration. This is a long period and many events can happen in a person's life during that time. This leads to the necessity for emotional supports as they attend school. The supports are seen as much more effective when they recognize the student's Aboriginal background. The implication here is that availability of supports is crucial to a student's well being. This must be provided in order for students to be successful. A model of a support system is the ACCESS Program. The students are assigned a counselor who has contact with them every two weeks.

- The students deal with racism in various forms at the university. There is always the chance of racism present in a large population of people. As the number of Aboriginal students increase at the university there will be more encounters between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people that will have to be dealt with. Racism does have an effect on a student's well being. If we are to retain more Aboriginal students at the university then a decrease in racism is a must. There must be ways found to promote more respect of different cultures. However if the students are still discriminated against then they must learn effective measures to deal with such situations. Students have suggested that they be trained in how to deal with racism at the university. There could be sharing circles monthly to meet and talk about how to deal with racism. Other students and staff can also learn about how to deal with their own racism and awareness of Aboriginal people. At this time there are presentations done in professional development days twice a year this could be

increased to four times a year. This presentation is done through the Aboriginal Student Center.

- **Spiritual:** The students have stated that Traditional Ways, Sacred Medicines and Ceremonies are important to be available to them at the university. The inference here is that the majority of the students have identified an interest in Aboriginal Traditional Ways and therefore these services need to be continued. There will be an increase in the number of Aboriginal students attending university therefore the need will be increasing in the future.

#### **Future Role of Services for Aboriginal Students at the University of Manitoba**

Now that there has been a study of Aboriginal Student Needs there has been clarification of strengths and weakness in supports for this population. The implications noted in the previous section are areas to be considered when considering resources for Aboriginal students. The strengths can be acknowledged and continued. Weak or absent services can be addressed and plans can be made to ameliorate these areas.

#### **Impact on the Aboriginal Student Center /The Native Student Advisor and the University of Manitoba:**

This information will be helpful to the Aboriginal Student Center to have an account of Aboriginal student needs at the University of Manitoba. I would say that this needs assessment confirms Florence Bruyere's use of the Medicine Wheel to deal with Aboriginal Student Needs and Programs (March 1996). They are doing a notable job in fulfilling personal supports for the students who attend the Center. Some of the strong areas are: Having Aboriginal staff present to serve Aboriginal Students; having a

Resident Elder available to support the students and to consult with other areas in the University; the continuation of the graduation Pow Wow and the provision of Aboriginal Teachings from a variety of Aboriginal cultures throughout the school year. There are some areas that could be stronger. There could be improved links to the cultural library, resource materials for spiritual information, the development of formalized buddy systems for new students and the training and development of Aboriginal peer advisors. I am aware that this would require more staff for the Center in order for this to be done.

In February 1998 the Final Report of the Building on Strengths/ Task Force on Strategic Planning at the University of Manitoba had the following recommendations.

**Recommendation 17 stated... “ Our recruitment efforts will therefore continue to seek individuals who have the potential to succeed in our university environment. This implies that we will continue to meet the requirements that have been approved by the Senate. Our ACCESS Programs are internationally recognized and that their activities should be enhanced.” (pp.28, University of Manitoba Task Force)**

**Recommendation 18 “ Develop a plan by December 31,1998, and increase efforts, after consulting with the aboriginal community, to recruit and retain aboriginal students. The plan must foster recognition of the needs and aspirations of aboriginal students.” (pp.28, University of Manitoba Task Force)**

This assessment will assist those involved with Aboriginal students at the University of Manitoba to ensure there is progression made on the statements made in this task

force report. I hope that regular consultation with Aboriginal people about services required for university will occur. This could be a permanent task force designed to meet about Aboriginal issues at the university at least four times per year. This would ensure continuity about dealing with various issues.

The needs of the Aboriginal students at the University of Manitoba are changing. There will be an increased number of Aboriginal students as the population of Aboriginal people is growing in leaps and bounds. These young people will require services and many of them are becoming more politically aware so that they will call for these services. There have been many positive remarks about the ACCESS Programs at the University of Manitoba in this assessment, I hope that the university will look at these models for ideas to promote excellent services for Aboriginal students. They are definitely fulfilling areas of need for Aboriginal students. This is clearly shown by the increased success rate of these students completing their degrees when involved with these programs.

### **Educational Benefits to the Student**

I learned the following:

- The process of planning, organizing, implementing and analyzing a needs assessment. This is a tremendous amount of work for one person to do.
- Planning skills: How to organize data in charts.
- Developed more skills on how to contact people, organize groups and do ongoing assessments to ensure the assessment went as smoothly as possible.
- How to plan a larger body of written work that, at many times seemed overwhelming to do. I determined that I needed a computer. I started without one (due to being

poor) and I am grateful for a fellow student who sold me a computer on payments so I could do my work.

- **Grassroots community work does effect change. Various people at the university are interested in this assessment and have stated the information will be helpful to lobby for changes of services. There is still a craft making group that is still running which I believe was started as a result of this assessment. This has given students a casual area for support with other Aboriginal people.**
- **A tremendous amount about the history and structure of Aboriginal education through my literature review. It became very real for me as I interviewed students. I found the focus groups were very powerful to discuss important education issues.**
- **More about the Aboriginal community as I did this work. They provided me with strong support to do this work. They provided me with information and encouraged me to be strong in my own process such as using the Medicine Wheel in this work.**
- **How important this work can be. As I read the literature about Aboriginal education I was very affected by the information about the residential schools. This experience has touched the lives of many people in my family. I don't want history to repeat itself.**
- **I learned that Aboriginal languages are still present in Aboriginal families and that many people are bilingual.**
- **Many students are coming from rural communities to the city for university. I was impressed with the resiliency and strength that many of these students have shown me.**



- About the diverse needs of Aboriginal students comparing it to what the literature stated and the actual interviews of these students. The literature displayed how the Federal government dealt with education for Aboriginal people and the struggle that the people have had in order to gain control over education for their own children. I know that the struggle is not over as the government continues to hold the purse strings for Aboriginal education.
- The students do know what they need. They taught me about how they survive within the primarily European education system. The issues are still present such as racism, poverty and abuse yet they survive connected to their communities and they are strong, intelligent, spiritual people.
- More about the Medicine Wheel. I am grateful for the people who came before me so I had examples about how it could be applied to different areas. Throughout my schoolwork I learned more knowledge about Traditional Ways. I did this personally by attending ceremonies. It was helpful for it kept me connected to myself and to other people in the community.
- Overall, I would say that this was a positive experience for me. It definitely broadened my knowledge about past and present Aboriginal education and about the University of Manitoba.

**Student Evaluation of the Practicum:**

This practicum was an excellent idea because this type of study has not been done at the University of Manitoba. I believe that it was unique since I am an Ojibway woman

who has done this assessment of other Aboriginal students. This commonality made it easier to acquire trust of the students.

I would have liked to have taken more administrative courses before I did this work because of the administrative background to be considered in doing this level of assessment. This was particularly true in dealing with the political structure of the university. The Aboriginal Networking Group and the staff of the Aboriginal Student Center helped me immensely by allowing me to be involved in some of their meetings with administration regarding Aboriginal issues.

This study is timely as the University of Manitoba has developed a Task Force on Strategic Planning to “ Plan for a New Vision For the University of Manitoba.” My colleagues have informed me that this assessment will be helpful in making proposals about services for Aboriginal students.

The use of the Medicine Wheel framework provided good concepts to consider as this assessment was done. It gave me a place to establish my ideas about how to examine student needs. It followed a holistic view of examining the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects of student life. Many of the students were familiar with the Medicine Wheel and this also made it more comfortable to work with. My learning about the Medicine Wheel was enhanced by my literature research. During this time period I also continued to increase my knowledge about Traditional Teachings by actively attending Traditional Ceremonies and Teachings.

At times it was hard for me to be role model to other students at the university as I did this work. I know that people from my home reserve are anxious for me to

complete my studies. There are not many Aboriginal graduate students and I felt pressured to succeed and do well.

I was able to fulfill the tasks that I set out to do in the beginning of this work. This made me feel good about what I have done. I found the work often overwhelming. In the beginning I didn't know where to start. I felt shy to organize interviews and groups but I was able to do it. I consulted with various people about my initial plans and I am grateful for those who supported my about my decision to use the Medicine Wheel. Some of these people were: Florence Bruyere, Bill Alcorn and Lyle Longclaws. Using the Medicine Wheel made my work more meaningful for me. I hope that others will become more interested in Medicine Wheel Teachings as they read this assessment.

The advertisement could have improved. I could have put advertisements in the newspapers or on television. My advertisement was done in the form of ad sheets throughout the university. I also contacted various Aboriginal Programs at the University as well as the Winnipeg Education Center, which had a high population of Aboriginal students in their programs.

I would have liked to consult with Elders and the pastoral staff at the university to improve the spirituality section. I felt that section was too small and they may have provided more ideas about questions for the students.

I would recommend that research with university students should not be done during intersession or summer. Many students do not take courses during these times and this drastically decreases the pool of potential respondents.

The idea of asking for recommendations from students came at the middle of the study. This was a suggestion by one of the students that I interviewed. The recommendations of the students are good. I wish there were more to consider.

There was a mix of data from the individual interviews and the focus groups. There were differences in the types of information from both areas. The interview schedule gave clear, definite answers, which were quantitative in nature. The focus groups gave essence to the experience of being an Aboriginal student. The information here was more qualitative in nature as the students shared with one another. The students were more passionate about expressing their ideas when they were in the focus groups.

An action plan for this work would be that, once my degree is completed, I would like to present this information to the Aboriginal Networking Group at the University of Manitoba. One of the goals of this group is to establish a House of Learning for Aboriginal Students at the University of Manitoba. I would like to see this vision come true.

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## Appendix A

### The Interview Schedule

#### Individual Interviews:

I explained to the student that I would require the demographic information from him/her. If they were to be individually interviewed I informed him/her that I would be using this interview schedule. I explained the format of the schedule. This would be explaining about the Medicine Wheel and that the questions would be applied to student life at the University of Manitoba. The student was free to ask questions about the Medicine Wheel if they were not familiar with it. I then proceeded with the scheduled questions.

#### Focus Groups:

I asked the focus group members for the demographic information. They were given preliminary information about the Medicine Wheel and then the discussions were started. I would ask them which area of the Wheel would they like to discuss first ( physical, emotional, spiritual or mental). We then carried on with the discussions. The interview schedule was used for discussion topics in the group.

#### Interview Schedule

Year in University: First\_\_ Second\_\_ Third\_\_ Fourth\_\_

Faculty\_\_\_\_\_

What is your first language? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you speak another language?

\_\_\_\_\_

What is your family's Language?

\_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a Single Parent? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have children? \_\_\_\_\_

Original Community: City/ Town/

Reserve \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you lived in Winnipeg? \_\_\_\_\_

How long has it been since you left your community? \_\_\_\_\_

(Small/ Medium/ Large community)

**Physical:**

Are your physical needs being met in areas such as housing: clothing: utilities: food:  
health care: dental care: daycare: transportation: glasses: recreational activities so that  
you are able to do your studies?

Housing. Utilities. Food: \_\_\_\_\_

Health care. Dental care. Glasses: \_\_\_\_\_

Daycare: \_\_\_\_\_

Clothing. Transportation: \_\_\_\_\_

Recreational Activities: \_\_\_\_\_

It requires money to meet physical needs therefore:

What is your primary means of support? \_\_\_\_\_

Is it enough? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you required support to speak about your financial needs with your Band \_\_\_\_\_

Education Authority \_\_\_\_\_ Student Aide \_\_\_\_\_ Other Financial Sponsor \_\_\_\_\_ i.e.

Metis Employability & Training Initiative Strategy \_\_\_\_\_

Who Assisted You? \_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT IS A RECOMMENDATION YOU HAVE REGARDING THIS AREA?**

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**Mental:**

Did you feel you were adequately prepared to enter university?

(Yes/ No) \_\_\_\_\_

For example: High school preparation, Mature student orientation. informed of orientations through the faculty you are entering, ACCESS program orientation. Other areas you would like to mention \_\_\_\_\_

Were you given adequate information to make choices about courses you required for your degree? (Yes/No) Comments

---

Who provided this information?

---

Have you required help with reading the course material? ( reading skills)

---

Who assisted you in this area?

Who helped you learn study and time management skills?

---

Have you taken the Introduction to University Course? Course 99.111

---

**WHAT IS A RECOMMENDATION YOU HAVE REGARDING THIS AREA?**

---

**Emotional:**

When times get tough who are your supports?

Outside of the university?

---

(Friends, family/ agency support- daycare, babysitter, counselor)

Who are your supports within the University of Manitoba?

---

Do you have family obligations? \_\_\_\_\_

(For example: partner, children, parents, grandparents)

Who depends on you for support? \_\_\_\_\_

If a crisis happened while you were attending school Where would you go for help /whom would you see?

---

Many Aboriginal people deal with racism in their everyday lives. Have you experienced this at the University of Manitoba? Yes /No \_\_\_\_\_

In what context?

---

If you needed to get support to deal with racism were you able to obtain this help?

\_\_\_\_\_

Who assisted you? \_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT IS A RECOMMENDATION YOU HAVE REGARDING THIS AREA?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Spiritual:**

What activities are positive for you that lift your spirits when you feel stressed, down or discouraged? \_\_\_\_\_

What makes you stay in school when things are difficult for you?

\_\_\_\_\_

What keeps your spirit going?

\_\_\_\_\_

Spiritual can be related to a spiritual community/ whatever you decide it is. Do you feel you have such a connection while you are at the university? \_\_\_\_\_

If you responded yes, what is it for you? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have one off campus? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to share what it is?

\_\_\_\_\_

Spiritual can be a connection to Traditional Ways/ Elders guidance.

Is it important for you to have access to Ceremonies, Sacred Medicines, and Elders?

\_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT IS A RECOMMENDATION YOU HAVE REGARDING THIS AREA?**

\_\_\_\_\_



## **Appendix B: The Consent Form**

### **Consent Form**

Jay-Lynne Jonston-Makinuk is undertaking " A Needs Assessment of Aboriginal Students at the University of Manitoba" using the Aboriginal Student Center as a practicum site. This needs assessment is being done to fulfill the requirements for a Masters in Social Work Degree. This will give the Aboriginal Students a voice in expressing their needs as they attend university: examine what needs are fulfilled so that students can successfully complete their degrees and to see which needs are lacking and which may be obstacles to success in university.

The students may participate in the assessment in two ways:

- You can choose to be individually interviewed or attend a focus group.
- The interviews will be held at the Aboriginal Student Center. The personal interviews will enable the student to speak about needs particular to themselves.
- The focus groups will be held in the boardroom of the Aboriginal Student Centre. (other areas will be used if this is not available). The focus groups will enable the students to identify needs common to Aboriginal students.
- The interview questions in the assessment will be examining the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of students' lives.
- Potentially, there are discomforts and risks with this assessment. Students may identify areas that are lacking which may raise emotional issues therefore; I will provide information for resources that will assist them to deal with these issues.
- Anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured when participating in this assessment. If your choice is one to one sessions anonymity will be ensured by having a private, confidential session.

- A requirement of the people who are participating in the focus groups will be to protect each other's anonymity and confidentiality by keeping the identity of the members in their group within the group. He/she will agree to keep the information shared in the group confidential. It will not be shared with others.
- There will be no identifying factors used when gathering and analyzing the information for compiling the statistical data. If I must use names in my report pseudonyms will replace the actual names of participants.
- You will have the freedom to withdraw from participation from this assessment anytime that you choose. There will be no consequences to you if you change you mind and do not want to participate further with this assessment. I would like to thank you for the participation you were able to provide for me with at this point in time.
- The information gathered through this assessment will be used for making recommendations for Aboriginal Students' programming needs and to the University of Manitoba's decision making body.
- This assessment will assist the Aboriginal Student Center and other support services at the University of Manitoba to identify positive aspects of service as well as those areas that require improvements and to assist with future programming.

Date:

Name:

## **Appendix C: Recommendations from the Students**

These recommendations are from the students who participated in this assessment.

After each physical, mental, emotional and spiritual section on the interview schedule

the students had an opportunity to comment. I have not altered or analyzed this

information. In the accordance with my plans of empowering Aboriginal students I will let

their recommendations speak for themselves.

### **Physical:**

- 1) I am not sponsored by the band but, my perception is that they are not involved enough with the students.
- 2) I think there should be an increase in funding.
- 3) I would like a drop in daycare for single parents for free if possible or I would like a parent co-op.
- 4) Recreational activities that are free and family oriented.
- 5) My Band Peguis is good for financial and academic support. Most others don't come close to us. There could be an improvement from other bands.
- 6) I don't think help should be based on your culture. Yes, I am thankful for the help but my friends need help as much as I do.
- 7) The funding hasn't changed in twenty years. It needs to be increased.
- 8) Students need more information about subsidies. For example housing and Child Related income support (CRISP).
- 9) Increase sponsorship with cost of living.
- 10) Higher allowances. They haven't been raised for 12 years.
- 11) More student recreational activities.
- 12) Housing could be improved for single students. There needs to be more leads about better housing.
- 13) Work for better subsidized housing for students living closer to the university.

- 14) Students need good support to deal with financial matters. For example how to deal with Canada Student Loans.
- 15) Some bands should be more aware about financial issues with regards to their students not having enough money to cover everything.
- 16) Funding from Bands should be based on individual need, not a base amount for everyone.

**Mental:**

- 1) I think that the introduction to university course is a good idea but I wasn't aware of it.
- 2) More support is needed for reading and writing.
- 3) The Introduction to University course is good for first year support.
- 4) There needs to be better scheduling for courses. i.e. night courses for study skills.
- 5) The Introduction to University Course should not be compulsory.
- 6) The Introduction to University Course should not be compulsory.
- 7) Especially Mature Students should take the Introductory to University Course. The Introduction to University Course should have more practical and hands on applications.
- 8) The Introduction to University Course was a good idea.
- 9) All students should take the Introduction to University Course.
- 10) I think that the education authorities need to stress time and discipline to motivate students
- 11) The Introduction to University Course should be more in depth.
- 12) The Introduction to University course is good for first year support.
- 13) Study and time management courses should be advertised more.
- 14) Make it mandatory for students to take the Introduction to University Course. It is an excellent course.
- 15) Be more supportive of first year students especially in the Faculty of Education.
- 16) Support for registration is important.

- 17) Have a constant follow-up to make sure students are using resources and making the best use of them.
- 18) Have a Native student orientation through the Aboriginal Student Organization. Consult with the students about this plan. Use an invitational model, include money and time management.
- 19) Examine the reason for course load weariness.
- 20) There needs to be more focus on reading skills and how to write papers.

### **Emotional:**

- 1) The cultural support therapist is good to have around.
- 2) I would like to have someone to talk to and for his/her to be easily accessible.
- 3) Make students more aware of prejudice, racism and discrimination. Teach them ways to deal with it.
- 4) Student's need more information about who they could speak to in they were in a personal crisis.
- 5) Students should seek out other students in the same dilemma when they are experiencing racism.
- 6) Coordinate an established support group. Use Aboriginal support and contemporary and Traditional methods to deal with emotional issues.
- 7) There should be more Elders and Traditional teachings.
- 8) There should be workshops about how Indian students can deal with racism.
- 9) Students should see qualified people to help them with problems that might arise with racism.
- 10) There needs to be more information about where to go for help about legal and psychological issues.
- 11) Students should talk out problems with racism. This can be done with the director of the Aboriginal Student Center or speak with a Traditional person.
- 12) In order to deal with racism give Aboriginal people assertiveness and aggression training if they are open to it.

- 13) Have an Aboriginal representative in every faculty so that we don't feel alone.
- 14) There needs to be more education. Many people seem to be afraid of me when I identify myself as Aboriginal. They seem to be afraid to say the wrong thing.
- 15) Teach other cultural groups about First Nations Peoples.
- 16) Students should feel comfortable seeking help from the Aboriginal Student Center at the University. Get to know the Elder and other students who are First Nations.

**Spiritual:**

- 1) I would like to see more (Spiritual) Traditional activities because of personal interest and spiritual guidance.
- 2) Have more activities for serious, sober people trying to maintain an Indian worldview.
- 3) I have a lack of trust regarding emotional/ spiritual sharing. Therefore letting people know what is available and letting them reach out on their own would be the best way to approach this area.
- 4) Respect the needs of other individuals around you. They may receive peace of mind through spiritual beliefs and ceremonies.
- 5) Make spiritual support more accessible.
- 6) There should be more cultural activities at the University of Manitoba for Aboriginal people.
- 7) I would like to see a class in spirituality, which includes smudging and naming ceremonies.
- 8) The courses in Aboriginal spirituality should be more in-depth and longer. The present courses are too short to cover the amount of material and the time given.
- 9) I believe the ceremonies available in the Aboriginal Student Center and reserves are important.
- 10) There should be classes teaching Traditional ways. They should include rituals and symbols.
- 11) Definitely keep the Aboriginal Student lounge. It feels good to see familiar people.
- 12) I think that exposure to healthy Elders and other Traditional ways can only benefit us as Aboriginal people. This would also provide information and experience to non-Aboriginal people.

13) **Students who would like to learn more about Traditional ways might be more comfortable seeking spiritual guidance if they were invited to a large gathering where they would not feel singled out if they felt shy. The more they are exposed to people who are friendly, the more likely they are to seek out their company.**

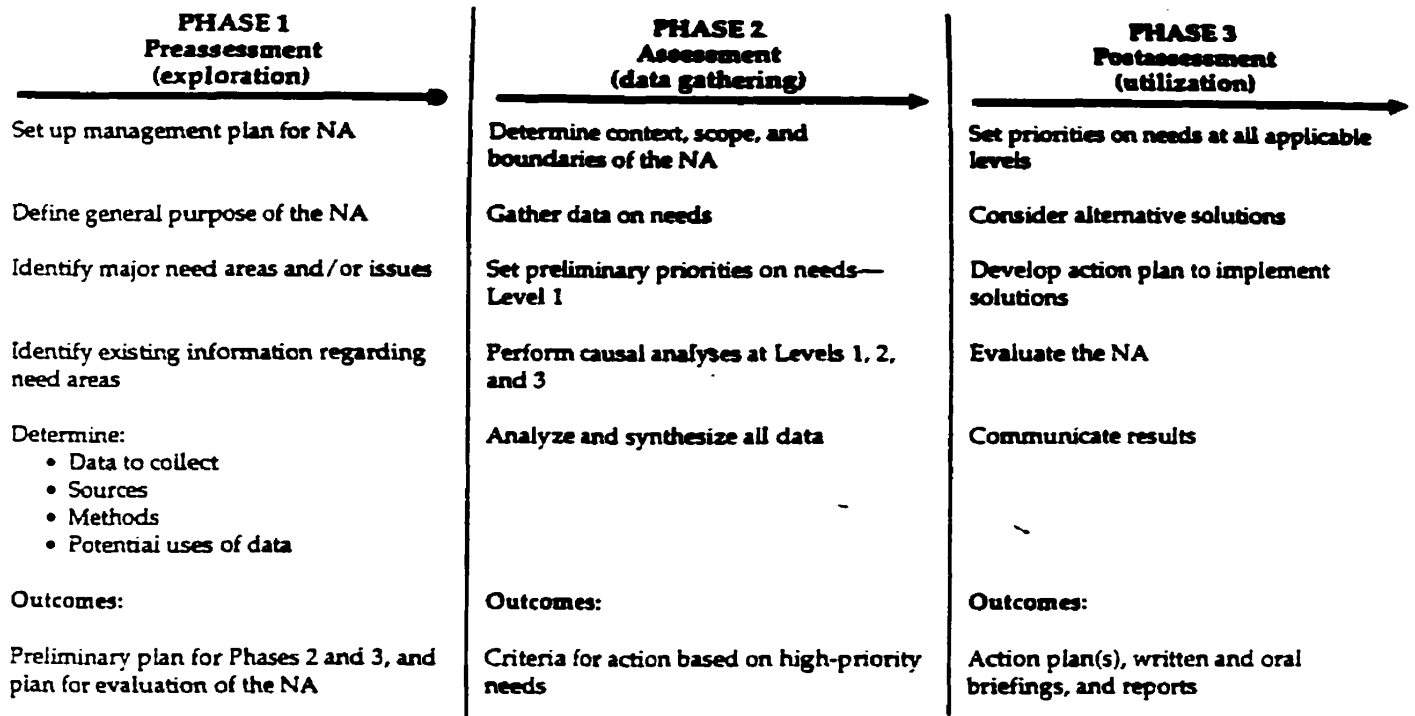
**These are good ideas for solutions to different issues that the students must deal with. Many of these recommendations are reasonable. Some are being dealt with at this time. There are sharing circles, there is some support for reading skills, study and time management skills. The students are asserting these areas continue. There is an identified need of more support for the first year students. There is a reconfirmation that the students would like Traditional ways be included in their needs for emotional as well spiritual support.**

**Appendix D**

**1. A Modality for Needs Assessment:**

**Witkin & Altschuld, The Three Phase Plan for Assessing Needs (1995)**

(Witkin & Altschuld p.15)



Three-Phase Plan for Needs Assessment

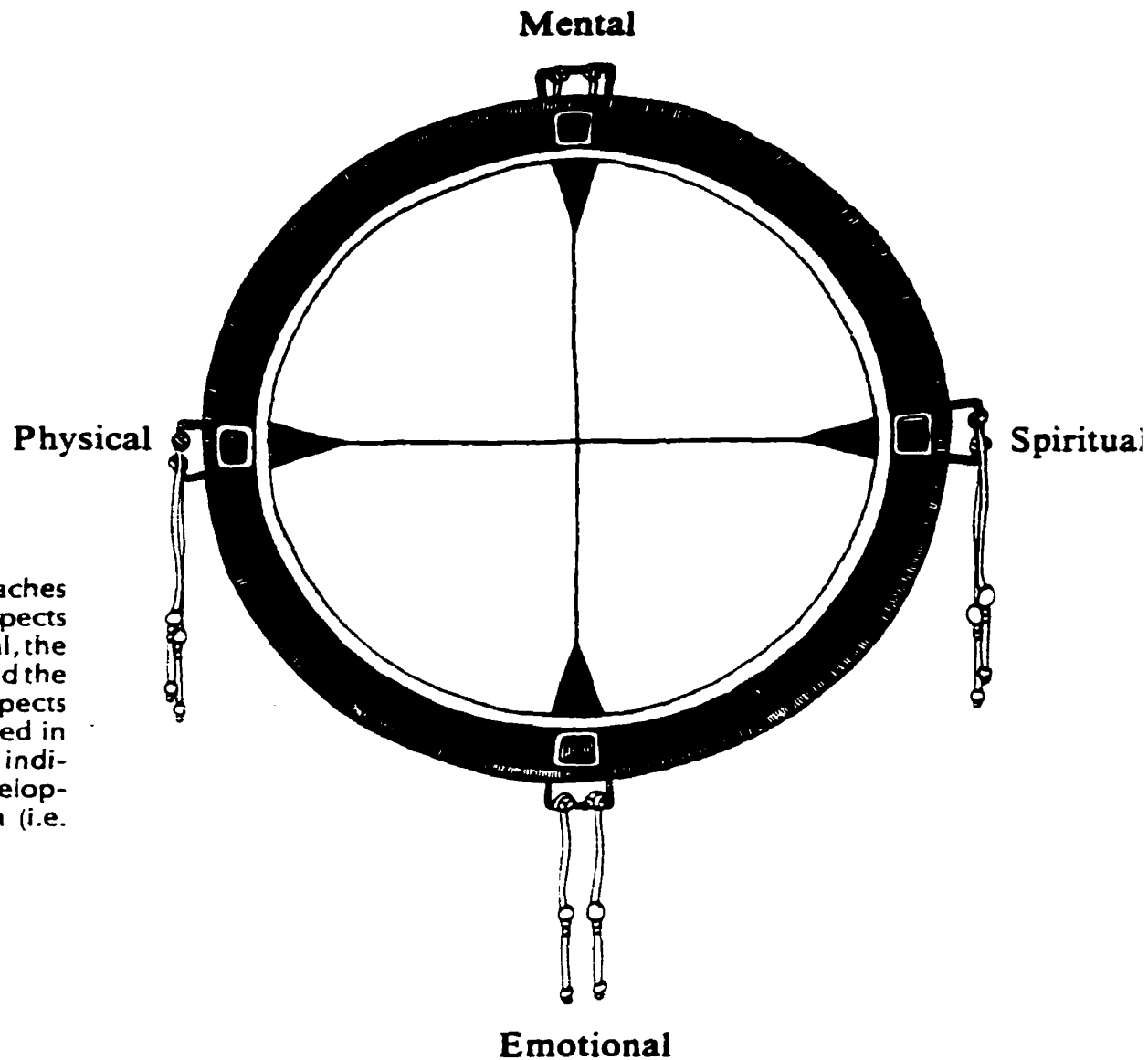


## Appendix E : Different Modalities using the Medicine Wheel

i) Judie Bopp et al

A Sample of the Medicine Wheel; Four Aspects to our Nature

(1984). (Judie Bopp p.12)



### The Medicine Wheel

**T**he medicine wheel teaches us that we have four aspects to our nature: the physical, the mental, the emotional, and the spiritual. Each of these aspects must be equally developed in a healthy, well-balanced individual through the development and use of volition (i.e. will).

ii) Odjig-White

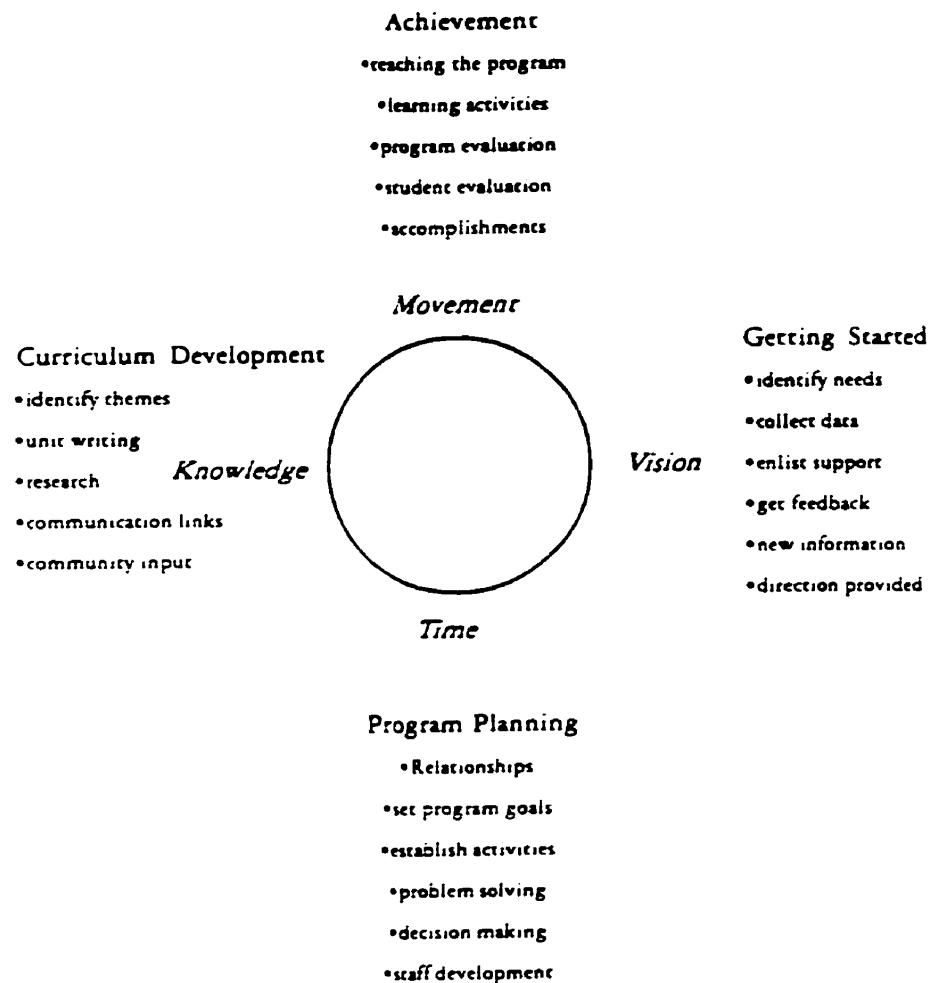
**Model A- Developing a Native Language Program**

**The Medicine Wheel Perspective, (1996)**

(Odjig-White p. 111)

Model A

**Developing and Implementing a Native Language Program;  
The Medicine Wheel Perspective**



iii) Odjig-White

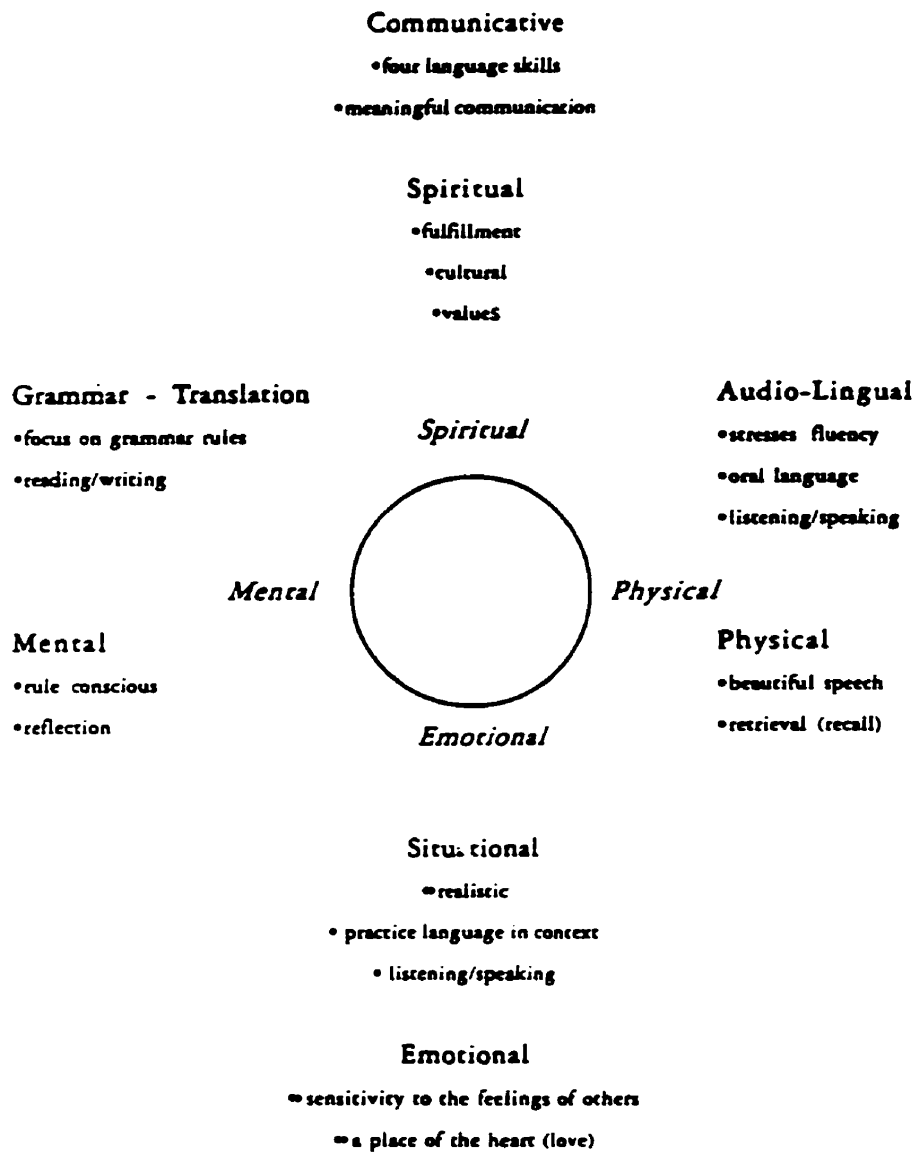
**Model B- Four Language Teaching Methods:**

**The Medicine Wheel Perspective, (1996)**

(Odjig-White p.116)

Model B

**Four Language Teaching Methods;  
The Medicine Wheel Perspective**



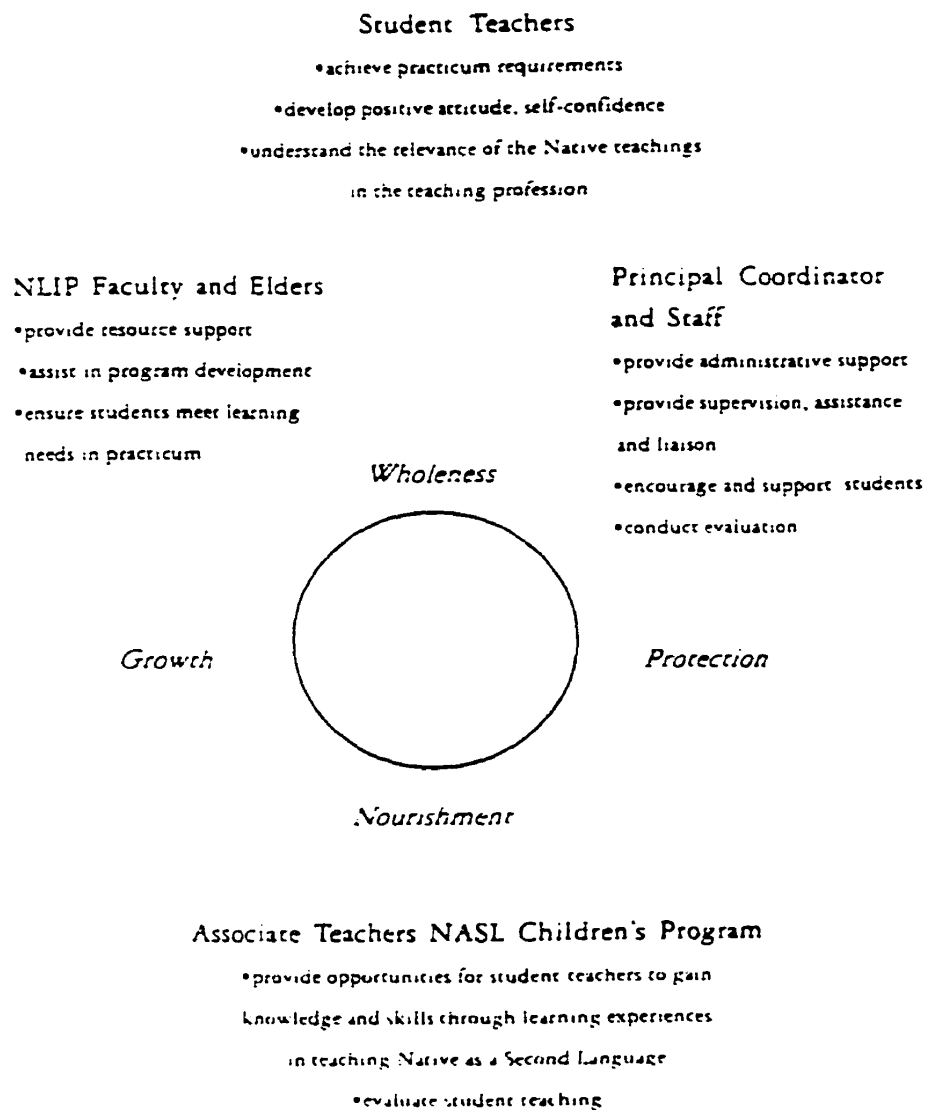
iv) Odjig-White

**Model C -Roles and Responsibilities in Practicum:  
The Medicine Wheel Perspective, (1996).**

(Odjig-White p.117)

Model C

**Roles and Responsibilities in Practicum;  
The Medicine Wheel Perspective**



## **Appendix F**

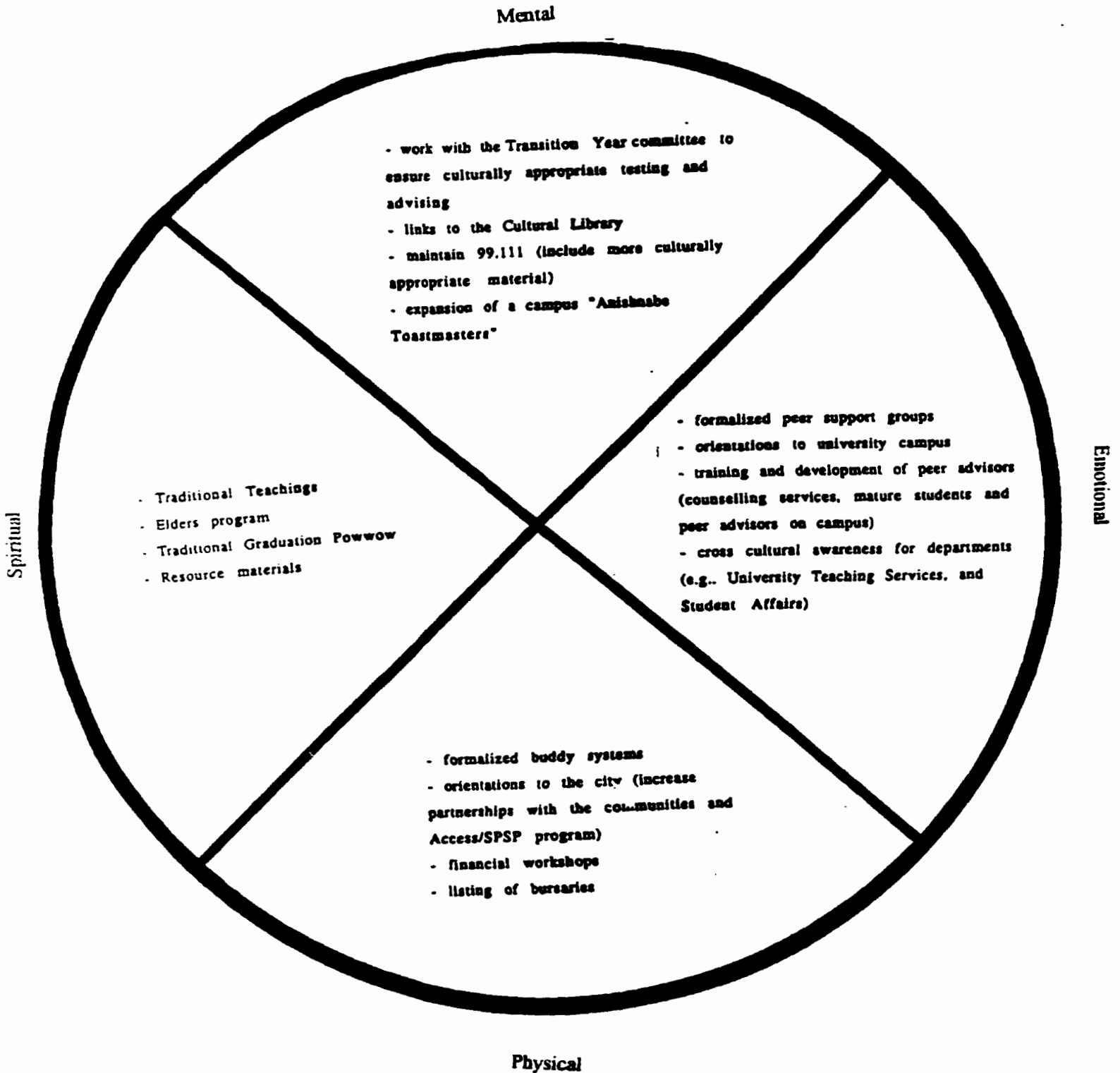
### **i. Medicine Wheel Applications**

**Florence Bruyere**

**Medicine Wheel Applied to Program Components  
for Aboriginal Students.**

Unpublished. (March, 1996)

Florence Bruyere  
March, 1996  
The Medicine Wheel Applied to  
Program Components for Aboriginal Students



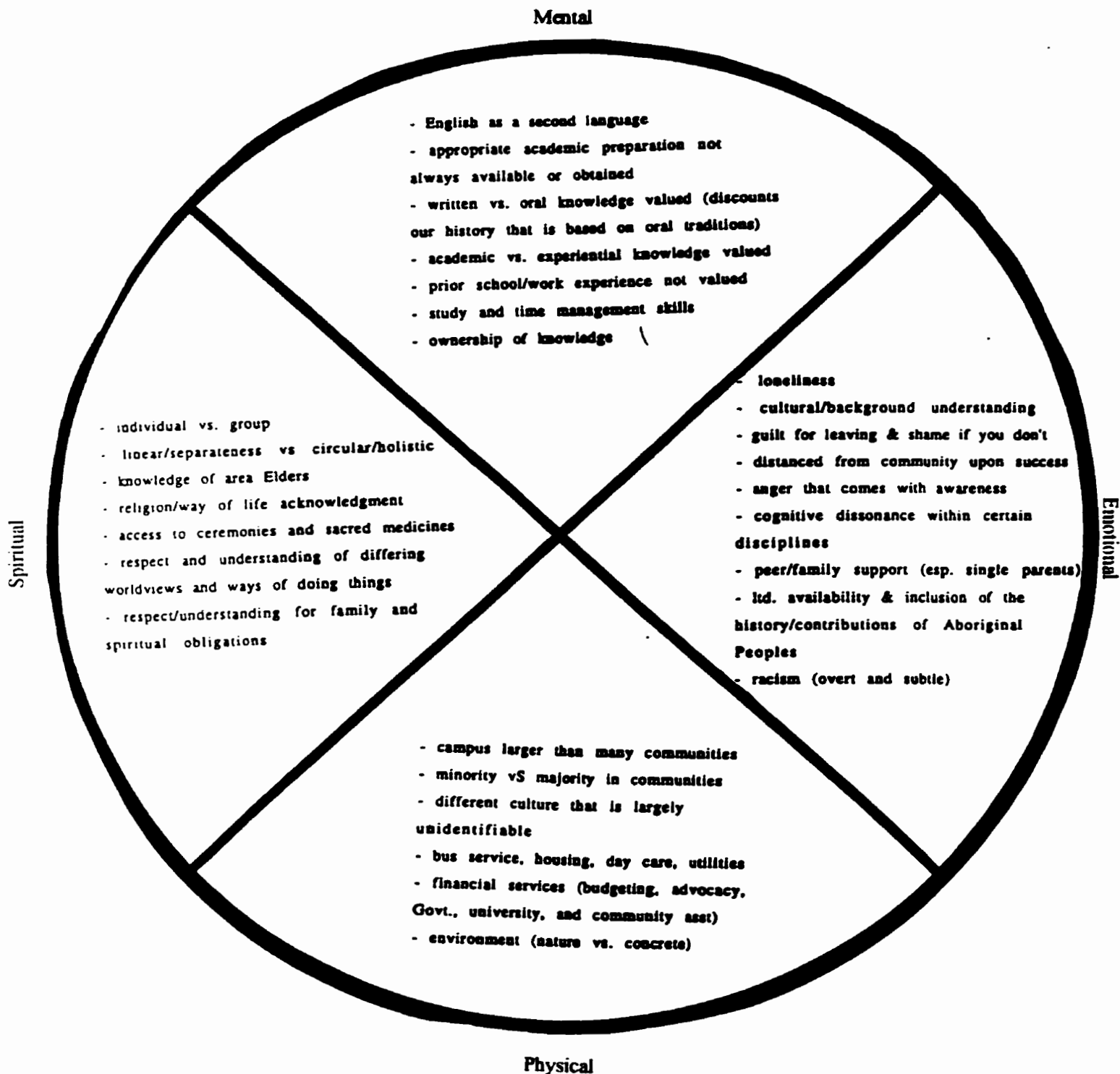
ii) **Florence Bruyere**

**Medicine Wheel Applied to Aboriginal**

**Student Needs at the University of Manitoba.**

Unpublished. (March, 1996)

**Florence Bruyere**  
**March, 1996**  
**The Medicine Wheel Applied to**  
**Aboriginal Student Needs at the**  
**University of Manitoba**





iii) Lyle Longclaws

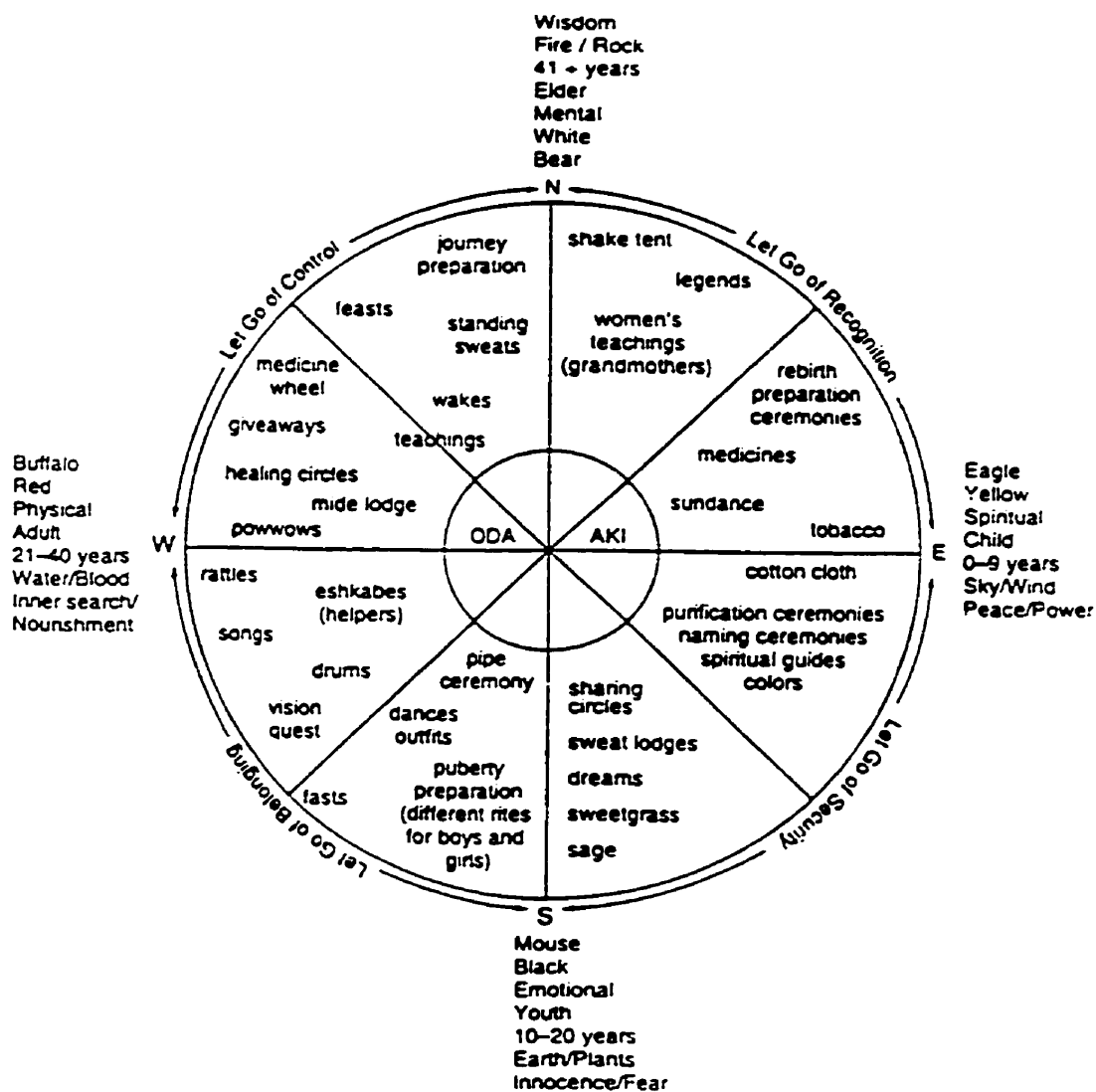
**Social Work and the Medicine Wheel Framework, (1994)**

(Longclaws, p.27)

# Social Work and the Medicine Wheel Framework

Lyle Longclaws

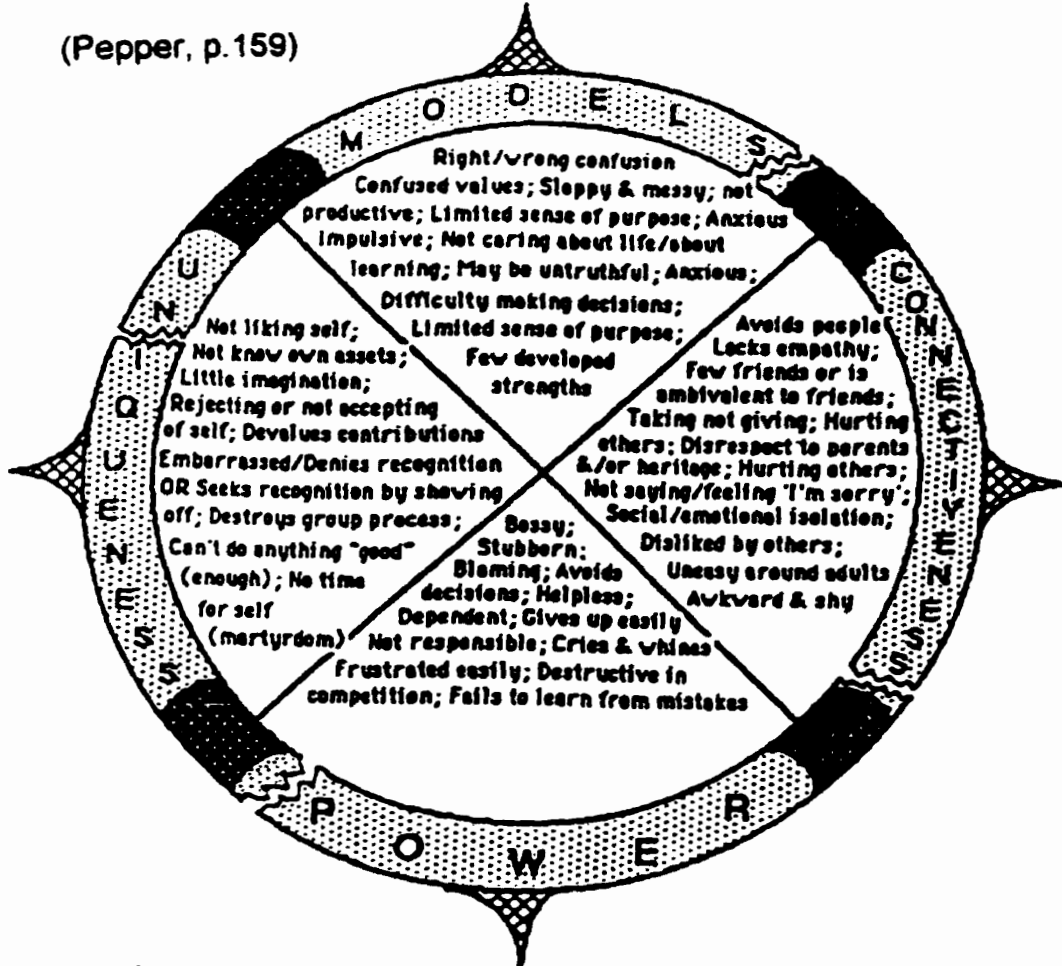
## The Anishinabe Medicine Wheel



iv) F.C Pepper

**Broken Medicine Wheel: Low Self-Esteem (1991)**

(Pepper, p.159)



1. Behaviors frequently hurt self and others.
2. Life incidents that stop growth erode these parts of the self.
3. Negative incidents affecting one part also affects other parts.

Adapted by Floy Pepper and Steven L. Henry  
 From Bertha Covington, Independent Educational Consultant  
 Spokane, WA 1991

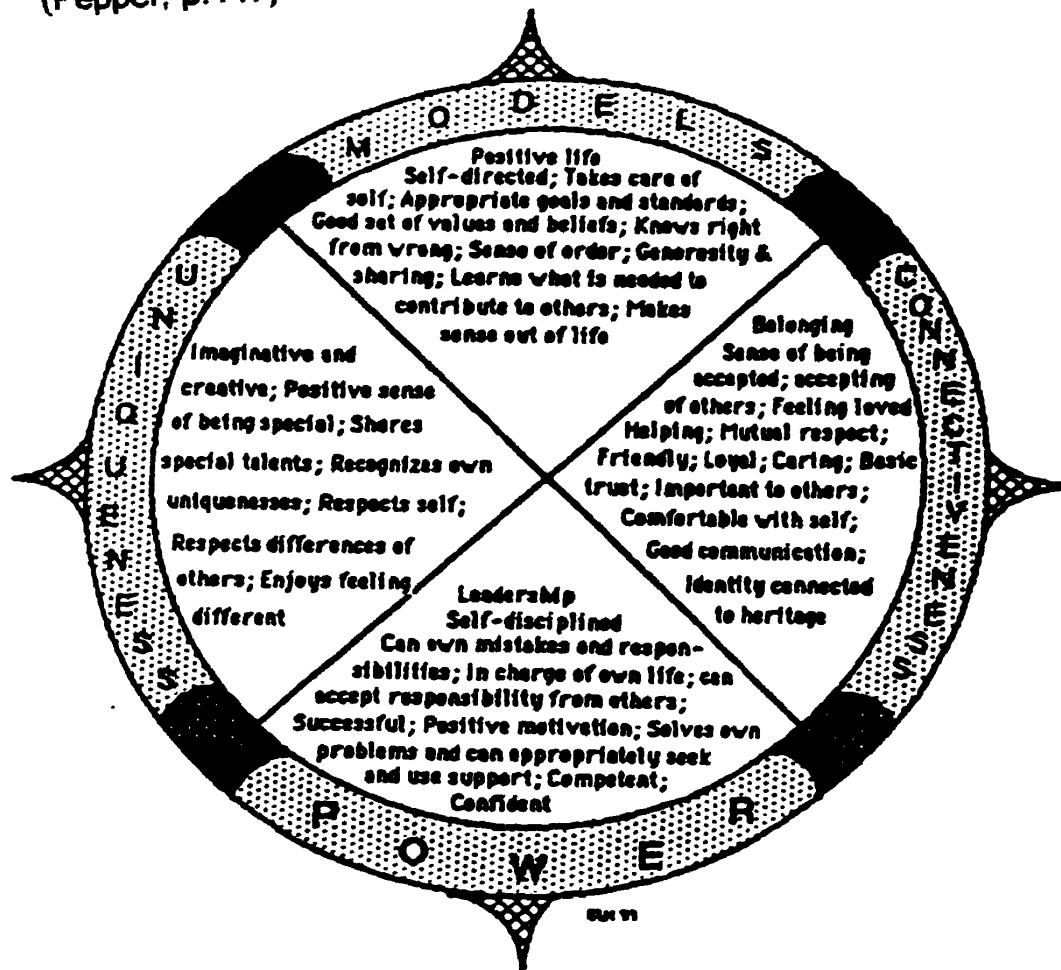
*Figure 2. Broken Medicine Wheel: Low self-esteem.*

v) F.C Pepper

## Intact Medicine Wheel: High Self-Esteem, (1991)

(Pepper, p.147)

Pepper & Henry



1. Everyone has these potentialities as part of the self.
2. Helping others to care for these basic needs allows growth.
3. We need to take care of these for ourself, as well.

Adapted by Floy Pepper and Steven L. Henry  
From Bertha Covington, Independent Educational Consultant  
Spokane, WA 1991

Figure 1. Intact Medicine Wheel: High self-esteem.

## **Appendix G**

I consulted with the various directors and coordinators of the programs primarily to inquire about how I may contact Aboriginal students connected to their programs.

They were all very generous in their support about the work that I was doing.

### **Some of the staff from the University of Manitoba included:**

Florence Bruyere, Director of the Aboriginal Student Center

Rainey Gaywish, Continuing Education

Vern Morrissette, Aboriginal Focus Program

Bill Alcorn, Director, ACCESS Programs

Brenda Lafreniere-Richard, ACCESS Program, Counselor

Dr. Fred Shore, Department of Native Studies

Roxanne Shuttleworth, Coordinator, Aboriginal Business Education Program

Harvey Ranville, ACCESS Engineering Program

Greg Selinger, Winnipeg Education Center

Dr. R. Hesch, Winnipeg Education Center

Bruce Miller, ACCESS Program, Academic Advisor

I would like to include:

The Aboriginal Student Association at the University of Manitoba

and The Aboriginal Networking Group at the University of Manitoba

**Outside the University of Manitoba I had other supports such as:**

**Chief Jerry Fontaine, Sagkeeng First Nation**

**The Manitoba Metis Federation of Manitoba, Winnipeg Office**

**The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs**

**Ublivik, Inuit Center**

**Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Resource Library**

**Treaty and Rights Resource Center**

**Dr. Lynne Ryan**

**I apologize to people whose names are not included on the list. I know that there were many more.**