

**Overcoming the Odds:
Resiliency in First Nations Adults
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**A Thesis Submitted
to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS

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BY

Margaret R. Sebescen

**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 Arts**

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Abstract

This research explored factors related to resiliency in a sample of First Nations adults. Using the complementary orientations of the salutogenic, phenomenological and humanistic models, interviews were conducted with 2 male and 2 female resilient First Nations adults. Consistent with current definitions of resiliency, these adults have reputations within the community and among their peers as being successful role models, healers or leaders as well as survivors. Interviews assessed life histories as well as methods of coping. Data consisted of interview transcripts and was analyzed using qualitative methods. Results support the validity of the theoretical models of Kobasa's hardiness construct and Antonovsky's sense of coherence as well as the personality theories offered by Maslow, Adler and Rogers. Additional findings indicate that forgiveness and spiritually transformative events may contribute to resiliency.

"I went from a victim, to a survivor, to a warrior."

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Chapter 1

Resiliency in Successful First Nations Adults

The concept of resiliency is one that speaks to the potential of human beings. This potential is exemplified by those who have the capacity to overcome and thrive in the face of adversity. This capacity to survive and thrive in the face of overwhelming odds is perhaps one of the most inspirational aspects of the human psyche. As empirical research in this area gains momentum, these endeavors seem to hold promise in not only defining the parameters of resiliency, but also for identifying resources of strength that may be used to help others in both therapeutic and preventative ways.

The history of humanity provides many examples of individuals and groups who have demonstrated resiliency in the manner in which they have managed difficult and challenging circumstances. Holocaust survivor, Viktor Frankl (1959) described enduring unspeakable horrors in Nazi death camps. His suffering led him to search for meaning in this experience and to evolve as a human being. Similarly, Nelson Mandela, a political and humanitarian activist was imprisoned for twenty years before he was freed. Upon his release, he promptly resumed his humanitarian efforts and became the political leader of South Africa. A current example of both collective and individual resiliency can be found in the First Nations population of Canada. While this Nation as a whole faced systematic deconstruction and near annihilation (Miller, 1989; York, 1990), many individuals and groups have managed to succeed and thrive in spite of a history marked by tragic losses. While much is known about the negative sequelae of this

history, very little is known about the positive outcomes or those who have excelled in their lives in spite of it. The purpose of this research was two-fold. The first objective was to identify variables that are related to resiliency in First Nations adults. The second was to explore the validity of those variables already described in the theoretical and empirical literature.

Chapter 2

Resiliency - A Review of the Literature

The concept of resiliency is one that encapsulates an individual's psychic ability to bounce back in spite of hardship. What began as observations of apparent invulnerability and invincibility among certain survivors of war (Ursano, Wheatley, Carlson and Rake, 1987), poverty (Chodoff, 1968) and psychological trauma (Anthony, 1974), has developed into a search for an understanding of the construct as a whole and the variables that are related to it. In their analysis of this concept, Dyer and McGuinness (1996) define resiliency as "a dynamic process highly influenced by protective factors. Protective factors are specific competencies that are necessary for the process of resilience to occur." Identification of these protective factors or competencies in response to extreme stressors or trauma has become central to the study of resiliency.

Salutogenesis - The Foundation of the Resiliency Construct

The central question behind resiliency is: why do some people overcome and thrive in spite of extreme stressors and trauma while others do not? A focus on factors that keep people healthy, rather than what makes people sick, is the orientation of the salutogenic model (Rosenbaum, 1990) and the basis of the resiliency construct.

Antonovsky and Sense of Coherence

In 1979, Antonovsky questioned the variable and sometimes opposing effect of extreme stressors on individuals. He postulated that the outcome of stressor(s) is dependent on tension management and that the degree to which one effectively

managed the stressor was, in turn, dependent on “generalized resistance resources” (GRRs). GRRs were defined as “any phenomenon effective in combating a wide variety of stressors” and could include financial, material, cultural and social resources.

According to Antonovsky, GRRs allowed individual to make sense of stressors and to develop, over time, a strong sense of coherence. To integrate the salutogenic model with the GRRs concept he initially defined sense of coherence as:

a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic, feeling of confidence that one’s internal and external environments are predictable and that there is a high probability that things will work out as well as can reasonably be expected (Antonovsky, 1979, p.132).

By conducting a series of interviews with individuals who had experienced trauma in their lives, Antonovsky was able to identify three central components that differentiated a negatively affected group from a highly functioning group. Three themes that consistently emerged were comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness with resilient individuals demonstrating high levels of all three dimensions. As a result of this exploration Antonovsky revised his earlier definition to include:

The sense of coherence is a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that (1) the stimuli derived from one’s internal and external environments in the course of living are structured, predictable, and explicable; (2) the resources are available to one to meet the demands posed by these stimuli; and (3) these demands are challenges, worthy of investment and engagement (Antonovsky, 1987, p. 19).

This orientation to stressors has been conceptualized as a personality disposition that facilitates stress mediation (Hart, Hittner & Paras, 1991) and a global predisposition in response to stress (Flannery and Flannery, 1990). Other models of adaptive coping that rest on the notion of particular personality characteristics have also emerged such as the stress resistant person (Flannery, 1987) with an emphasis on mastery, personal commitment and social support and the more predominant hardy personality of Kobasa (1979).

Kobasa and Hardiness

At around the same time that Antonovsky was developing his concept of coherence, Kobasa (1979) took a similar orientation and sought to identify the personality characteristics that contributed to stress resistance in a group of highly stressed executives. In this initial work she observed that stress resistant or hardy executives had:

a clear sense of his values, goals and capabilities, and a belief in their importance (commitment to rather than alienation from self) and ... a strong tendency toward active involvement with his environment (vigorousness rather than vegetativeness)... and an unshakable sense of meaningfulness and the ability to evaluate ... [change] in terms of a general life plan with its established priorities (meaningfulness rather than nihilism) (p. 9).

Kobasa and Puccetti (1983) later refined this earlier definition to include the three central personality characteristics of commitment, control and challenge:

Persons high in hardiness easily commit themselves to what they are doing (rather than feeling alienated), generally believe that they can at least partially control events (rather than feeling powerless), and regard change to be a normal challenge or impetus to development (rather than a threat) (p. 840).

Rooted in existential psychology, this model views the individual as an active, responsible and free player in the defining of meaning in one's life and circumstances.

Hardiness and Sense of Coherence: Overlapping Constructs

Both Antonovsky and Kobasa cite the importance of personality characteristics in the healthy management of stressors within a larger social context. While these models emerged out of stress specific inquiries, they are not stress specific in their applicability. Rather, they describe a particular personality constellation that allows an individual to manage stress well and continue functioning. The early definition of hardiness is remarkably similar to that of Antonovsky. Like Antonovsky's comprehensibility and manageability, Kobasa's commitment and vigorousness rests on the assumption of an internal locus of control. That is, the individual under stress must take an active stance in relation to the stressor.

Both concepts highlight the importance of meaningfulness. Antonovsky (1990) highlights meaningfulness as the most critical component of SOC and has found that high comprehensibility and manageability can not be maintained without it. As such, meaningfulness is seen as the motivational component of SOC. This motivational component can be likened to Kobasa, Maddi and Kahn's (1982) definition of a committed persons as having "a generalized sense of purpose that allows them to

identify with and find meaningful the events, things and persons in their environment” (p. 169).

Historical Antecedents to Resiliency

Historical antecedents to resiliency can be found in many theories of personality. Many personality theorists have recognized that individuals are able to overcome difficult situations and strive to realize their full potential as human beings. This striving is seen, by some, as a basic human need or drive and most theorists recognize this as a hallmark of healthy, psychological functioning. To place the resiliency construct within a larger context, the most basic elements of these theories will be discussed here.

Perhaps one of the most cited personality theorists, Maslow, asserted that all individuals strive to actualize or become all that they can be. According to Maslow (1950), there is a hierarchy of needs that is present in all individuals. This hierarchy includes basic physiological and safety needs at the bottom, then the need for belonging and esteem and at the top of the hierarchy is the need for self actualization. Maslow believed that the other needs must be met in order for self actualization to occur. Maslow identified seventeen characteristics of the self actualizing person. Some of characteristics of the self actualizing person are; perceiving and accepting reality accurately and readily, being problem focused, being self sufficient, enjoying life, having social interests, being egalitarian, being creative and being well integrated.

Adler (1964) viewed the creative power of the individual as a determinant of her/his potential. He argued that the creative drive of the individual is what directs one's actions into a meaningful goal. According to Adler, “the important thing is not what one

is born with, but what use one makes of that equipment" (p. 86). He emphasized the individual's free will and responsibility in decision making and consequent life-style. While Adler acknowledged the contributions of heredity and environmental influences, he contended that how an individual used her/his creative power is what ultimately defined one as a person.

Allport was concerned with the apparent lack of a definition for a psychologically healthy personality. Unsatisfied with defining positive mental health as the absence of neurotic or pathogenic symptoms, he sought to define positive mental health in its own right. According to Allport (1955), the mature or healthy person has a widely extended sense of self, a warm style of relating to others, emotional security and self-acceptance, a realistic perception of self and reality, is capable of self objectification and has a unifying life philosophy.

Rogers (1961) used the term "fully functioning" to describe an individual who was realizing her/his potential and maximizing the experiences that life has to offer. According to Rogers the fully functioning person is open to new experiences, has an existential orientation to life, trusts him/herself to make independent, autonomous decisions, recognizes and accepts his/her freedom and is creative. Rogers believed that fully functioning individuals were able to live "the good life" and find challenge, reward and meaning in their existence.

According to Kelly (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1981), a healthy person is willing to evaluate and test the validity of her/his constructs, is able to give up invalid constructs, is open to opportunities for growth and can effectively perform in a variety of roles. While these

theories contain some antecedents of the resiliency construct, none actually emphasizes or accounts for the widely differential effects of stressors on individuals.

The Empirical Findings

While some prevention research has been done with Native children (Fleming, 1992; Laquer, 1998), to date there have not been any empirical explorations of resiliency variables in successful First Nations adults. Bowman (1996) found that the sense of coherence construct and scale were valid for a group of Native Americans and that a high sense of coherence was negatively correlated with measures of mental and physical distress with this population. This research provides preliminary evidence to indicate that the sense of coherence construct may be a relevant model for the study of resiliency in First Nations adults. As such, the validity of this model and that of Kobasa's are worth exploring further.

In his work exploring the correlates of resiliency, Brodsky (1998) found that commitment, problem solving and the presence of social and emotional support were the most highly correlated factors with resiliency. Attachment, optimism, self esteem and positive affect were also strongly correlated with resiliency. These findings provide some support for the dimensions of the healthy, well adjusted personality in the above mentioned theories (Adler, 1964; Maslow, 1950; Rogers, 1961).

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the nature of resiliency and the variables related to it in First Nations adults. The secondary objective was to explore the validity of Antonovsky's sense of coherence theory, Kobasa's hardy personality model,

other models of psychological health, and the current empirical evidence. The central research question was: How were you able to overcome the challenges in your life?

Chapter 3

A Humanistic Research Model

Getting answers to the questions of human experience has been the essence of the psychological enterprise. Researchers have sought these answers through both quantitative and qualitative inquiries. Qualitative research seeks to uncover the meaning of the human experience as experienced by the participant. By analyzing what is actually said, rather than a numerical representation of a perception, thought or belief, the qualitative method captures the richness of human experience in its' greater context (Miles and Huberman, 1990). Additionally, validity problems associated with a quantitative approach was avoided by using a qualitative inquiry.

A complementary research paradigm is that of phenomenology. Based on a philosophical school of thought that was initially founded by Edmund Husserl at the University of Freiburg during the period from 1916 to 1929, phenomenology examines the construction of reality. Specifically, it considers our interpretation of the world as a dynamic interplay of what is out there, the object, and our experience of it, the subject. The goal of phenomenology is to "articulate explicitly the implicit structure and meaning of human experience" (Keen, 1975, p. 19). Maslow (1966) emphasized the importance, relevance and appropriateness of the study of subjects in psychology rather than objects and recognized that the study of the subjective requires a different orientation than that of the objective. Phenomenology seeks then to explain the subjective, qualitative nature of the human experience.

As such, the orientations of the phenomenological paradigm and the qualitative method of analysis fit well with the exploration of the resiliency construct in First Nations adults and was employed here.

The Phenomenological Process: Some Guidelines

Spinelli (1989) offered a synopsis of the works of Idhe (1977) and Grossman (1984) that is worth presenting here. Because the phenomenological method is concerned with the matter of subjective experience and its role in meaning-defining, the following guidelines were utilized in data collection procedures.

The first step is the rule of epoche. This rule recognizes the unavoidability of experimenter bias and urges the experimenter to bracket these expectations or assumptions as much as possible. Suspending any bias encourages an openness in the process that will contribute to greater clarification of the phenomenon or construct under study.

The second step is the rule of description. Rather than trying to immediately fit what information is gathered into pre-existing hypotheses, this rule encourages a description, rather than an explanation, of what is experienced. An extension of the rule of epoche, this rule also discourages the limitation of the data by the experimenter. This rule allows for a more concrete examination of the person's subjective experience.

The third consideration is the rule of horizontalization. This rule discourages the hierarchical organization of information and encourages equal treatment of all pieces of data. This rule allows for a more comprehensive examination of the experience as it is reported.

These recommendations require that the experimenter consciously acknowledge and actively bracket and suspend any pre-existing biases as much as possible. These recommendations were utilized in the data collection procedure for this study.

Chapter 4

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were two female and three male resilient First Nations adults. One male participant was screened out as he did not meet the inclusionary criteria. The ages of the participants ranged from early 20s to late 40s. Those who were included in the study have reputations within the community and among their peers as being successful role models, healers or leaders as well as survivors of traumatic life events which is consistent with current definitions of resiliency. The following criteria were used as part of the selection process:

1. The individual had experienced hardships on any of the following dimensions:
physical, psychological or sexual abuse, childhood neglect, spiritual or cultural persecution, violence, poverty.
2. The individual is recognized as a role model by others.
3. The individual has recognition in the First Nations community as being successful in at least one of the following dimensions of his/her life; economic, political, educational or spiritual.
4. The individual has training or expertise that is acknowledged by the First Nations community as being valid. As such, this person will be relied upon by others because of this specialization.
5. The individual has a reputation for having experiential knowledge that has contributed to his or her wisdom and ability to advise others.

Procedure

The participants were contacted by the researcher to explain the study and to request participation. Interviews were scheduled with those who agreed to participate at a location that was convenient for them. Interviewees read and signed an informed consent form (Appendix A) which outlined the purpose of the study prior to the interview. A copy of the consent form was left with the participant for his or her future reference. Interviews were a combination of open ended and semi-structured questioning. Interviews were audio taped and then converted into typed manuscripts. All participants were guaranteed confidentiality and all individuals with access to the data signed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix B). A pilot interview was conducted early in the thesis process to assess the validity and comprehensibility of the research questions and to test the methodology. The following interview transcript was developed to gather demographic information, life histories and styles of coping. Some secondary questions were excluded if they had already been answered in response to another question.

Primary & Secondary Interview Questions

1. What was your life like when you were growing up?
2. What were the most difficult problems for you?
 - How did you handle it?
 - What has been the most helpful for you in coping?
 - What are your sources of strength?
 - Did your way of managing change over time?
3. What do you think had the most positive effect on you?

What would you say made the biggest difference for you?

Some people have found that having a close and caring relationship with someone else during their childhood made the difference for them – have you found this to be true in your life?

4. What advice would you give to a young person who is experiencing the same kind of struggles with life? What insights have you gained from your experiences?
5. Do you think that you are resilient?
6. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about your story?

In his book, *The Psychology of Science*, Maslow (1966) wrote, "By far the best way we have to learn what people are like is to get them, one way or another, to tell us...". To encourage the telling of their personal stories, the researcher used a Rogerian interview style. According to Granit (1981):

The researcher employing the Rogerian technique adopts a caring attitude of unconditional positive regard; is non-judgmental, empathic and sincere; does not tell respondents how to think or feel, and values his or her own and other people's thoughts, feelings and values. (p. 14)

It is believed that an atmosphere of openness and acceptance was created by using this orientation and that the subsequent data were more comprehensive.

Chapter 5

Data Analysis

The data consisted of interview transcriptions (Appendices C - F). The interviews were transcribed verbatim and all identifying information was removed to maintain confidentiality. A qualitative analysis of the data were based on the methodological recommendations of Van Kaam (1959) and Miles and Huberman (1990). Both models had strengths relative to this data set and recommendations from each were incorporated in the analysis of this data. According to Van Kamm's recommendations, the first step involves reducing the data by separating all expressions that are related to resiliency and coping in each data set. In the second phase each expression was tested against the following two criteria:

- A. Does it contain a moment of experience that might eventually be a necessary and sufficient constituent of the experience under study?
- B. If so, is it possible to abstract this moment and to label it without violating the formulation presented by the subject?

Statements or expressions that met these criteria were highlighted in the transcript. The third step involved refining the coding system to reflect the significant descriptive constituents present in the data sets. A list of codes (Appendix G) was established based on the theoretical contributions of Antonovsky (1987) and Kobasa (1979), current empirical contributions of the stress and coping literature (Alwin and Revenson, 1987) and hallmarks of psychologically healthy individuals found within the personality theories of Maslow (1950), Allport (1955) and Rogers (1961). Codes were added and revised as

coding proceeded. Additionally, the interviews were also coded according to process as well as content. Some codes such as "self awareness" may not have been evident as a content statement but became evident in the process of the interview.

To maintain the flow of the narrative and preserve the context of the information, the interview transcripts were left intact and specific units of thought were highlighted for coding purposes. The data were coded by the researcher and a second trained coder. During the first phase of data coding both coders independently reviewed the codes and coded one transcript. Initial inter-rater reliability was .75. During the second phase of coding, codes were refined and discrepancies in interpretation were discussed prior to coding the remaining data. The remaining data were coded with a final agreement rate of .95. In the presentation of the final analysis of the data, the following inclusionary criteria were used:

A. Descriptive constituents that were present in three out of the four data sets are considered significant where,

B. the fourth data set does not contradict the constituent under study. In this case, the fourth participant was found not to have any concerns or issues related to the constituent or that the constituent was not significant to his/her experience.

Aggregating and Displaying the Data

The interview transcripts were coded and the data were compiled according to code (Appendix E). The nature of the data and the results are presented in the context of the specific research questions in a descriptive manner.

Chapter 6

Results and Discussion of Content Analysis

The content analysis of the data support the theories offered by Kobasa and Antonovsky and the empirical evidence on effective coping, and it substantiated some of the elements of healthy personalities, particularly those of Maslow, Adler and Rogers. There were also two additional and significant findings that were directly related to resiliency in this sample. All participants reported experiencing a positive, transformational event from which they went on to live resiliently. They also reported not only experiencing forgiveness for their abusers, but gratitude as well for the lessons learned by it. These results will be presented in turn.

Hardiness and Coherence

Both Kobasa's theory of Hardiness and Antonovsky's Sense of Coherence were substantiated by this data, although the data provided direct contextual support for Kobasa's theory and Antonovsky's theory was supported by the process elements of the interviews. As both theories describe a specific type of personality constellation that allows one to manage stress well and continue functioning, it is expected that resilient individuals would have characteristic personality attributes or styles of coping. These theories have similar underpinnings such as the importance of meaningfulness, purpose and the sense of efficacy in one's life. The results of the data will be presented in the context of each theory.

Hardiness

Individuals whom Kobasa would describe as hardy are people who are action-oriented and committed, feel effective and have a sense of control in the face of life's stressors, and accept change, positive or negative, as a normal occurrence in life. The participants in this study fit with Kobasa's definition of hardiness and the results will be presented in terms of each of the hardiness components.

Commitment

Persons high in hardiness easily commit themselves to what they are doing (Kobasa and Puccetti, 1983). According to Kobasa, Maddi and Kahn (1982), committed persons:

have a generalized sense of purpose that allows them to identify with and find meaningful the events, things and persons of their environment. Relevant to action, they are interested enough in themselves and their relationship to the social context that they cannot easily give up under pressure. In short, committed persons' relationships to themselves and the environment involve activeness and approach rather than passivity and avoidance. (p. 169).

As such, commitment was assessed by an analysis of commitment to self and others.

All participants reported a commitment to self in terms of taking action to help one's self overcome hardship and achieve goals as well as a commitment to helping others. This commitment to helping others occurred in the context of the participants' personal history and experience. For example, two of the participants who were abused as children are currently working in the child services field helping children either avoid or

cope with similar circumstances. All participants in this study were directly involved, via their employment or vocation, in the healing, well-being or evolution of the First Nations community. With respect to commitment, some of the participants stated the following:

The children always come first. I don't know them, but I know they are there, and I know I'll do everything I can to make their worlds a little bit better - P.

My thinking of it is that I'm not going to let it (sexual abuse) get me down and I'm going to do what I can to help other people, like children, know that that's not allowed - it's wrong. It is not their fault - D.

There a direct relationship between the most difficult life experiences of the participants and their subsequent career choices. For three out of four participants this connection was very clear and they reported wanting to spare younger generations from the difficulties that they encountered in their youth. All four participants reported that their careers were a very important aspect of their lives and that they were using their positions within their fields in a pro-active, productive and progressive way. All participants reported having a commitment to improving the lives and experiences of Aboriginal people.

Control

Persons high in hardiness generally believe that they can at least partially control events, as opposed to feeling alienated. According to Kobasa, Maddi and Kahn (1982):

Control enhances stress resistance perceptually by increasing the likelihood that events will be experienced as a natural outgrowth of one's action and, therefore, not as foreign, unexpected, and overwhelming experiences. In terms of coping, a

sense of control leads to actions aimed at transforming events into something consistent with an ongoing life plan and is, thus, less jarring (p. 169).

By control, the authors do not imply a conviction that one has complete control over all circumstances but rather, that one is able to utilize her/his resources to interpret and integrate the situation in a way that is meaningful for her/him. In circumstances that are unwanted and that are not malleable, this influence occurs primarily on an intrapersonal level and provides a particularly salient aspect of this component of hardiness. As such, the control aspect of the hardiness theory was assessed by statements of control, efficacy and mastery in circumstances that participants believed they could not change. Participants perceived control in terms of how they handled difficult life circumstances or how they responded to life in general. Control, in this case, is conceptualized as an internal process where the individual transforms the event into something useful. As stated by J:

What positive thing can I take out of this horrible mess that will make me a better person because of it? Because that's the lesson I am supposed to learn from that.

This sentiment was shared by all of the participants. The content analysis revealed that all of the participants did not believe they were in control of external circumstances, particularly those that were the most detrimental to their well-being. Rather, they all reported feeling that the Creator provided these experiences to them because they had the strength to handle it, they could grow from the experience and could, in turn, use the experience to help others.

You're not here to question what Creator puts in front of you. The Creator will put in front of you only that which you can handle. If you can't handle it and you can't take it, He wouldn't give it to you - J.

Participant A also stated:

I should be dead but I know the Creator is watching out because he's got plans for me - not to say that I have like you know, what is called a Messiah syndrome or Messiah complex, but I honestly believe I am going to go out and change the world.

This philosophy allows one to contextualize experiences in terms of a greater life plan and all participants reported actively engaging in this process of life construction.

Challenge

Persons high in hardiness regard change to be a normal challenge or impetus to development rather than a threat (Kobasa and Puccetti, 1983). According to Kobasa, Maddi and Kahn, this sense of challenge:

mitigates the stressfulness of events on the perceptual side by coloring events as stimulating rather than threatening, specifically because they are changes requiring adjustment. In coping behaviors, challenge will lead to attempts to transform oneself and thereby grow rather than conserve and protect, what one can of the former existence (p. 170).

The challenge component of hardiness was assessed by the acceptance of change, both positive and negative, and the recognition that change is a normal part of life that provides opportunities for growth. As with the control component of hardiness, the

challenge component also refers to an internal process of acceptance and integration of changing life circumstances. However, in this case the second part of challenge is a resultant change in terms of growth for the experiencing individual. As opposed to being resistant to or threatened by change in their environments, all participants reported being able to accept circumstances that they were not able to directly influence. They also reported actively seeking meaning, particularly trying to find a positive aspect in the situation. As stated by D:

There's things you can't change and that's the way it is. You have to accept it. That one of the things about being spiritual and understanding that there is no coincidences and that things happen for a reason. To try and look at the positives in everything and every bad situation - you try and look for a positive. I may not like the situation and there may not be a damn thing I can do to change it, but maybe something good will come of it down the road. Accept it, sometimes grudgingly, but accept it and move on.

In circumstances that could not be changed, three out of four participants indicated that they would respond in some way by changing something within themselves such as their perception and attempt to learn and grow from the experience. As with control, this orientation to life is one that is expressed within the context of a spiritual perspective that was shared by all of the participants.

The three elements of hardiness, especially those of control and challenge, were closely related and even overlapping at times for this group of participants. As was

mentioned, the control and challenge elements were supported by the spiritual beliefs of the participants and a desire to seek positive meaning in life circumstances.

Antonovsky's Sense of Coherence

The three components central to the sense of coherence construct are comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness. Individuals with a strong sense of coherence are those who consistently incorporate all three elements into their world orientation and consequent responses to life and its demands. Results of this study indicate that all of the participants have a high sense of coherence. These results will be examined within the context of the three components of the sense of coherence construct.

Comprehensibility

People with a high sense of coherence feel that the stimuli derived from one's internal and external environments in the course of living are predictable, structured and explicable. According to Antonovsky this aspect of coherence:

refers to the extent to which one perceives the stimuli that confronts one, deriving from internal and external environments, as making cognitive sense, as information that is ordered, consistent, structured or clear, rather than noise - chaotic, disordered, random, accidental, inexplicable. The person high on the sense of comprehensibility expects that the stimuli he or she will encounter in the future will be predictable, or, at the very least, when they do come as a surprise, that they will be ordered and explicable (p. 16-17).

As with the control component of Kobasa's theory of hardiness, all four participants reported taking an active role in making sense out of the circumstances that occurred to them. With regard to traumatic events, participants described a process of comprehensibility that involved initially asking the question, "Why?" or "Why me?", which was followed by an active process of making cognitive sense out of the circumstance. This cognitive processing involved seeking something positive from the experience and then emerging with new knowledge or information that one did not have before the circumstance. Participant J stated the following:

I've often found, and usually in a short period of time for myself, things (traumatic) that have happened to me and I'll sit there thinking, "Why, why, why?". I'll talk about it to myself. I find that the experience become handy within a very short time. I will have no doubt that someone will come into this office; whether it be a student, family, friend or somebody, will come in within the next year and have a similar experience, and they will come in here looking for help not knowing what to do, and I will, if nothing else, say, "Yeah, I know how that feels.". I find that has happened a lot in my life, even the really traumatic stuff.

The comprehensibility component is one that seems to be acquired over time and with growing maturity. All of the participants reported evolving into a comprehensive orientation toward life over time and that initial difficulties in life were interpreted as inexplicable. For three of the participants, who endured extremely traumatic circumstances in their youth, this orientation led to escapist coping such as avoidance and addiction. The resultant coping eventually lead to even greater difficulties. These

participants reported having a positive transformational moment which involved the realization that their lives could and should be better, where they experienced healing and then went on to lead lives that involved the component of comprehensibility.

Manageability

People with a high sense of coherence believe that the resources are available to them to meet the demands of life. According to Antonovsky, resources:

may refer to resources under one's own control or to resources controlled by legitimate others - one's spouse, friends, colleagues, God, history, the party leader, a physician - whom one feels one can count on, whom one trusts. To the extent that one has a high sense of manageability, one will not feel victimized by events or feel that life treats one unfairly. Untoward things do happen in life, but when they do occur, one will be able to cope and not grieve endlessly (p.17-18).

All four participants indicated that they had the resources available to meet the demands that were presented to them. The resources highlighted by the participants were social, spiritual or educational resources. Educational resources took the form of supportive professors, opportunities for higher education and exposure to new ways of thinking. As was stated by P:

I started going to school and learning so much about psychology and sociology and everything, it just blew me away. I wanted to learn, learn, learn. I just wanted to know so much. It really just created a whole new world for me. A whole different world of why you are the way you are, what made you the way you are, who P was.

Three out of the four participants reported having experienced similar kinds of benefits of higher education. Like all of the other life experiences reported by the participants, they reported experiencing an expanding knowledge of the world, people and subsequently themselves through their experiences at University and with supportive University professors.

Social resources took the form of support, advice or wisdom from friends, family or significant others. As stated by D;

When in doubt, seek out. That's the biggest thing for me, because it works for me so well - to find somebody that I can talk to about it.

All participants reported the importance of talking and sharing their problems with others. As stated by J:

Talking about it helps. I need to talk about it so that I can rationalize and make sense in my mind, or listening to other people's stories so I don't feel so alone.

Spiritual resources involved the belief in a higher power, a belief that their lives were predetermined and faith that one is not presented with circumstances that one cannot handle. These resources also included spiritual counselors, others who held the same spiritual beliefs and ceremonies and rituals that are representative of the participants' spirituality. All participants believed that life circumstances represented life lessons and they all reported actively engaging in learning from their experiences.

According to P:

I was given an opportunity. I should have been dead today, but I am alive today. Somewhere, someplace, God said, "P, you've got something to contribute here on earth and you are going to do it."

As stated by A:

My support system is my culture, my traditions, Sundance, my lodge, the sweat lodge, my pipe, you know, those things. That's my support. You know, that's what empowers me.

All participants reported embracing a spiritual life. However, not all participants reported having traditional Aboriginal spiritual beliefs. They all reported relying on their spirituality in times of crisis and all credit their current circumstances to a spiritual grounding in life.

Meaningfulness

People with a high sense of coherence believe that the demands of life are worthy of investment and engagement. According to Antonovsky this component of meaningfulness:

refers to the extent to which one feels that life makes sense emotionally, that at least some of the problems and demands posed by living are worth investing energy in, are worthy of commitment and engagement, are challenges that are "welcome" rather than burdens that one would much rather do without (p. 18).

All participants reported experiencing a meaningful existence. They also reported actively creating meaning in their lives by seeking the lessons from their experiences and trying to grow from it. Like the challenge component of hardiness, the participants

reported using their traumatic life experiences to provide help to other people. With respect to having gone through many challenges in life, participant D stated:

It's up to me to be a teacher because I'm a student for 50% of my life and I'm a teacher for 50% of my life. I think that's what is important. All of us resilient Indians have to go out and spread the word.

Personality Theories and the Characteristics of a Healthy Personality

The personality characteristics of this group of resilient individuals can be best represented by the personality theories offered by Maslow (1950), Adler (1964) and Rogers (1961). These characteristics were analyzed in terms of their presence in the content as well as the process of the interviews, with content referring to what was actually said and process referring to how things were said. The data provides support for the notion that resilient individuals are also psychologically healthy. The data also supports the multi-dimensionality of psychological health with no theory taking precedent over another. However, these theories do offer some insights into psychological health and may be indicative of the underpinnings of resiliency and will be presented here.

According to Maslow (1950), individuals strive to self actualize or live to their fullest potential. Some characteristics of self actualizers that were evident in this sample were the acceptance of self and others, a focus on problems as opposed to self, personal autonomy, the experience of mystical or peak experiences, an identification and sense of unity with all people and are democratic, ethical and creative. Adler (1964) emphasized the importance of free will and responsibility in decision making and

consequent life-style. According to Adler, "the important thing is not what one is born with, but what use one makes of that equipment" (p. 86). This statement is a central component of the resiliency construct and it is not surprising that all participants in this study fit with his definition of psychological health. Rogers (1961) believed that fully functioning individuals seek to both realize their potential and maximize the experiences that life has to offer. All of the participants in this study fit these criteria and some of the characteristics of fully functioning individuals that are evident in this sample include an existential orientation to life, trust in him/herself to make autonomous decisions and a recognition of personal freedom and responsibility.

Coping Literature

All four individuals in this study reported primarily using an active, problem focused strategy that included a spiritual component to coping with problems. A secondary problem focused strategy reported was active meditative with an emphasis on either cognitive or spiritual components. The participants also employed emotion focused strategies which involved seeking advice and support from parents, friends and family. These strategies have been supported in the literature as being effective and adaptive in coping with stress (Aldwin and Revinson, 1987).

A close, caring and confiding relationship with one individual has also been related to resiliency in adults (Lieberman, 1982). Three out of the four participants reported that they could consistently rely on one parent during their youth for support. Additionally, three participants also reported having a significant adult relationship with a life partner from whom they receive on-going emotional support.

Additional Findings

Transformational Events

Three participants recalled incidents which signified both a negative and positive transformative event. The negative transformative event was an episode in which the individual felt that she/he could not cope effectively with the event and consequently, the circumstances of her/his life. The negative transformational event represented a cumulative effect of enduring abuses in which the coping strategies available to the individual were no longer effective. All three individuals went on to employ coping strategies that involved substance abuse and each described a period in her/his life when their functioning was seriously compromised or impaired.

These individuals also describe experiencing an event that was positive and transformative which resulted in the individual recognizing and altering destructive, negative life patterns in favor of a more positive and meaningful existence. All report that they continue to benefit from this experience and the resulting re-orientation to life.

As stated by A;

A week prior to me going to my first Sundance, my girlfriend and I had a discussion and she told me she couldn't take my drugs anymore. She couldn't take it anymore - that she was going to leave me if I didn't smarten up. But I went to Sundance - that was the most powerful experience of my life. Everything changed at that Sundance..... That summer I attended another Sundance and that changed me - that was it - I quit drinking, I quit doing drugs right there, that was it, I stopped.

For Participant P, the transformation was exposure to post-secondary education. In response to the question, "What had the most positive effect on you and your life?", P stated:

I think after I had gotten to school and realized the vast amount of knowledge out there that I didn't know, that I was so narrow-minded, that I was so seeing things in only black and white. There had to be - starting to go to school and learning so much about psychology and sociology and everything, it just blew me away I wanted to learn, learn, learn. I just wanted to know so much. It just really created a whole new world for me.

Although there does not appear to be any literature specifically on positive transformative events, this reorientation to one's life can be conceptualized as a shift from unhealthy coping to a psychologically healthier stance. In this case the models provided by Maslow (1950), Adler (1964) and Rogers (1961) would seem to apply. It seems that the transformative event has the potential to mark the beginning of the self actualization process (Maslow, 1950), the recognition of free will and personal responsibility (Adler, 1964) and the realization of one's potential (Rogers, 1961).

Some of the transformative experiences described by the participants in this study can be conceptualized as peak experiences. Maslow (1964) proposed that one characteristic of self actualizing individuals was the presence of peak experiences. Peak experiences can be described as powerful, transcendent experiences in which the individual has a humble, ego-less feeling of being a part of a whole and unified universe where there is extreme gratitude for life and the meaning that can be found within it.

These experiences often leave an individual changed, for the better, forever. Although the presence of peak experiences were not purposely explored here, the positive transformation reported by the participants in this study fit with some of the criteria of peak experiences as described by Maslow.

A Rebellious Nature

Three out of the four participants reported that they chose a path in life that was different from what was expected of them. They also reported successfully confronting resistance to their life direction and consequent actions. These individuals can be characterized as pioneers within their fields. This rebellious nature can be seen as adaptive in allowing the individual to externalize problems. Rather than internalizing problems and carrying a sense of victimization, these individuals were able to perceive themselves as separate from the extreme circumstances they faced. This externalization process was particularly adaptive in allowing individuals to reconcile abuses endured during their youths. The ability to externalize problems continues to be adaptive as these individuals proceed with their life plans.

Forgiveness, Appreciation and Value in Trauma

Three out of the four participants reported that they forgave and were grateful to the individual(s) who had the most detrimental effect on them during their formative years. All three participants indicated that forgiveness was integral to their growth and represented a positive and defining shift in their orientation to living. These individuals also expressed gratitude for the benefits of these experiences. In relation to the physical abuse from his step-father, Participant A stated:

With all that aside (abuses), I thank you for teaching me how not to be, for teaching me how to respect women by showing me what not to do to them. You know I appreciate that and I appreciate it (physical abuse) too because you did make me tough you know. I suppose in some sick way that, without the lessons you brought into my life, I would have been a little weaker and there would have been some points where you know, the toughness you put in me helped me get through.

Similarly, Participant P said:

Without forgiveness, I don't think I would be where I am today. I had to forgive a lot of people that hurt me ... I think if you cannot forgive you cannot go ahead in this world.

Additionally, the context of forgiveness occurred within an understanding of the circumstances of the abuser. Participant P stated:

I knew somewhere along the line these people - I don't think they woke up one day and said, "I think I am going to sexually abuse 'P' today." I don't think that's the way it happens.

With reference to his father, Participant A went on to say:

He taught me that we are all products of our environment. The environment that we grow up in dictates how we'll be in our adult life. He grew up in an environment where his father was screwing around on his mother left and right, this and that, and his mother was extremely overbearing ... cause now I know

why he cheated on my mother all the time and why he was so goddamn overbearing on me.

The researcher could not find any empirical literature on the psychological benefits of forgiveness. However, many authors and theologians have explored and promoted the notion of forgiveness when treating individuals who have experienced abuse. The idea that trauma can be transformative is also a notion that is explored by authors such as Anna Salter (1995) and Wayne Muller (1992). These authors propose that trauma can be transformed into something that is positive. In the case of the participants in this study, the transformation of trauma into a source of strength was an element that is evident in their life stories and contributed significantly to their resiliency.

Understanding of Self as Resilient

All participants in this study indicated that they believed they were resilient. Beardslee (1989) explored the concept of self understanding in several groups of resilient individuals. In this work he found that resilient individuals have a unifying concept of self and of how they came to be and that this concept functioned as a protective factor against stressors. The same conclusions can also be applied to this group of individuals. Each presented a life story along with several challenges that contributed, in a positive way, to the overall meaning of their lives. That these individuals see themselves as resilient fits with the concept of self understanding, of knowing one's strengths, and being able to label them.

Conclusions, Limitations and Future Directions

The participants in this study supported the theories of resiliency provided by Kobasa and Antonovsky and the healthy personality theories. Moreover, these participants also offered something new to the study of resiliency. They highlighted the importance of forgiveness of others as part of their growth and also pointed to the potentially transformative nature of trying life circumstances.

Due to the idiographic nature of this exploration, the results of this study can not be generalized to a larger group. Rather, the results represent a delineation of the subjective experience of resiliency in four individuals. These results provide some insight into their experience and offer some direction to future research, particularly as they relate to issues of forgiveness of others and personal transformation. The issue of forgiveness of self did not come up in the interviews. It is recommended that this component of forgiveness also be further explored. These issues have not been explored in depth within the empirical psychological literature and the author encourages work in this direction in the future.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form for Participation in Research:**Overcoming the Odds: Resiliency in First Nations Adults**

This research is being conducted by Margaret Sebescen, a graduate student in the Department of Psychology at the University of Manitoba. It has been approved by the Human Ethical Review Committee and is being supervised by Dr. Marvin Brodsky, Ph.D., C.Psych. The purpose of this research is to learn more about resiliency in First Nations adults. Resiliency is the ability to bounce back in spite of hardship and very little is known about resiliency in First Nations adults. This interview will be used to assess the variables that are related to resiliency in First Nations adults.

Participation in this project will involve an audio-taped interview with the researcher. You will be asked questions about your life history and how you coped with difficult circumstances. The interview will be kept anonymous and confidential. The results of the final study will be presented in group format at presentations and in publications. To protect confidentiality and anonymity the following measures will be taken:

1. Identifying information will be removed from the transcripts.
2. Your name will not appear in any of the data. The data will be assigned a number code that is matched to your name. Only Margaret Sebescen and Dr. Marvin Brodsky will have access to this information.
3. Tapes of the interviews will be erased upon the completion of the study.
4. Access to the data will be limited to Margaret Sebescen, her Graduate Committee and her research assistants. All individuals involved in the project have agreed to a confidentiality contract.

Participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. You may choose not to answer some of the questions. You may decide at a later date to withdraw from the study and to request that all materials received from you be destroyed. If you have questions about this research you may contact Margaret Sebescen at (204) 261-9594 or Dr. Marvin Brodsky at (204) 474-9626 or the Chair of the human Ethical Committee at (204) 474-8259. The interview will require that you remember difficult times in your life and this may result in negative feelings. If these feelings persist, it is best to discuss them with a trusted friend or family member or to contact Dr. Brodsky or the Psychological Service Center at (204) 474-9222.

There is a lot of information about the negative effects of hardship on the First Nations community. However, very little is known about those who have been able to overcome hardship and excel in their life in spite of it. This research has a great deal of potential for identifying the factors that have made a positive difference in the lives of successful

First Nations adults. By identifying sources of strength, therapeutic and preventive measures can eventually be developed to help others.

Thank you very much for your participation.

I have read and understood the above, and I agree to participate in this study.

Name (Please print)

Signature

Date

If you wish to receive a summary of the research findings, please print your name and address below and a copy will be sent to you in the Spring of 2000.

Appendix B
Confidentiality Contract

Confidentiality Contract

Resiliency in First Nations Adults

This study will explore the variables that are related to resiliency in First Nations adults. The data will consist of audio-taped interviews which will be transcribed for data coding and analysis purposes. All participants in this study have been guaranteed confidentiality with respect to their identity or any identifying information that may exist in their interviews. As a member of the graduate committee, transcriber or research assistant it is critical that this confidentiality be maintained as part of your participation in this project.

I agree that I will not discuss the content of the interviews or reveal the identity of the participants to any person who is not directly involved in this research either now or in the future.

Name - Please Print

Signature

Date

Margaret R. Sebescen - Principal Investigator

Appendix C

Interview with A

A: (not clear) I just had a huge exam. Man, are there ever a lot of terms to learn? Like, I must have counted like a 120 different, little things you got to know about different theories, different processes and stuff.

M: Have you thought about where you want to go with it?

A: Well actually, this was kind-of a long choice. It want to be studying . I want to major in and minor in .

M: Oh, Wow!

A: Yeah, so that's what I'll be pursuing is an degree and I hope to be going on to my Masters in .

M: That's good.

A: Yeah, so.

M: So can you tell me about where you grew up and where you were born and what your earlier years were like.

A: Okay, I'm just trying to figure out how to start this without sounding dramatic. Okay, I was born in the city of , on at Hospital and I was born to a single mother of seventeen years old named and my father was not in the picture. I guess, what's significant with me in the whole resiliency aspect - that this is a significant part that I'd like to include is the fact that my father, in a sense, courted my mother on the reservation of , that's my home community. It's about a six-hour train ride from towards on the rail and my father, at the time, was the Indian agent of and he was also an Aboriginal man which is pretty significant back in the '70's, I guess, for, you know, native people to be working for government so had a lot of pull type of thing and he courted my mother and I guess, I was conceived on a road trip in . He took her out the reserve to and she became pregnant with me and then, by the time I was born, she had moved to and we were living with a hard-core Christian family called the . That's where I spent the first year of my life after my birth. Following that, my mother moved out on her own after she had met a man by the name of who I guess, convinced her to get out of these people's house because they were pretty crazy, eh.

M: Right.

A: This family was a white family - the . They took in a lot of boards, Aboriginal boards, like from the reserve and stuff and my mother was one of them. They were good though, they were a good family but they were a little too controlling so she got out of that environment and proceeded to live on her own and work and a relationship with became a little more intense and they moved in together. So for the next two years of my life up to the age of three they lived together and then when I turned around the age

of four, things started to get pretty hairy because of my father - well, he became my father.

M:

A: Yeah, I guess, my surrogate father or whatever you want to call it, he was an extremely abusive guy. So what occurred in the couple years, for the two next years, up to age five, there was a lot of violence in the home.

M: Right.

A: and so he comes from a background of violence himself. is a native from outside of . It's a reservation his mother is , eh, and his father was a man. So he had quite an interesting mix in him, and I guess growing up in he had a lot of problems being native and black and living in , so he had a lot of anger and I guess that came out in the relationship with my mother. So there was a lot of severe abuse involved with that relationship.

M: Do you remember that?

A: Oh yeah, like he used to put my mom in the hospital all the time and me too. Like there was a lot of abuse of me too from . Like, he used to beat me, beat me and my mom with an army belt,(like with an army belt) and different things like that.

M: He was pretty vicious.

A: Oh yeah, like, he came from the background, like, don't cry, you know what I mean, like don't cry, you're a pussy if you cry and you got to be tough. The reason I'm beating is so that when you get older nobody else will ever beat you. That was his famous

M: philosophy

A: That was his philosophy on life. And unfortunately that's where he came from. Ooh, his mother was extremely oppressive and I understand that now but as a child I didn't, eh.

M: Right.

A: and - so I guess over that time there were a lot of problems. In growing up the closest people I had to me were my mother and my auntie , my mother's sister. And when I turned four years old, my Auntie passed away. She died from an aneurysm (?) in her brain and that drove my mother into a psychotic episode, eh.

She lost her mind for about 6 months and had to be hospitalized. During that time I went in to live with my father. He took me away, to, kind of, get away from the hecticness and we spent this time in . During that time the really kind of shitty part of that whole thing is the fact that he took my mother's other sister to along with him and started relations with her.

M: So, your aunt.

A: Yeah, My other auntie . My mother has four sisters - one deceased, and three brothers. She comes from a family of seven and there's six living still. There's Auntie , Auntie , Auntie (who is now passed away), those are all my auntie's and including my mother . Oh, I guess that would make eight, eh. But, aah...

M: So did your mom know when she was, I guess, she was in , during that time...

A: Yeah, she was at the Psyche. Ward. I don't recall which hospital but she was pretty sedated for quite a long time because she was hearing voices and went into a real psychotic episode having medicated it because of the loss of her sister. And at that time of my life it was pretty rough going to but before that, I should touch up on to, like a lot of my childhood before 5 years old was spent going back to the reserve during the summer and not necessarily the reserve but my family's trap line where I would spend summers with my great-grandfather and my great-grandmother. They were wonderful people and like, they're really old. Back then in late 70's/early 80's they were already in their 80's, and still trapping and fishing and living out in our trap line which was called It's mile on the Rail - you get off in the middle of nowhere and you walk down a trail and there's our cabin. We have two lakes on our trap line (on my family's trap line). One's called Lake and the other Lake. Summer's were spent there away from so that was always the nice thing, eh and I would play with all the other children and we would always go out with my cousins - the woman that my mother grew up with - she's not really my auntie but I've always considered her my auntie. She comes from , as well and she had five children that I grew up with and they always come to too with us from the city - from and we'd all go up together as a family and spend time with the great-grandparents and all the other little Res. kids who'd come out to our trapline for summer camp. A lot of families would come to our trap line. It's kind of a, it's considered summer camp for a lot of people.

M: It's a gathering place.

A: Yeah, so there would be like a tent city of all these canvas house tents, you know, and, like, in the winter all you would see is the frames but in the summer people would come and put their canvas over the frames and make their homes there so there would always be tons of kids at the summertime. And I recall my grandmother, she passed away, while I was very young; she passed away during my third year or fourth year of life and I remember and this should be interesting for you as a psychology person because, I told you I'm taking introduction to psychology and I remember

learning about the different phases of development - of child development and I kind of think and it's weird now that I took just a bit of psychology because I understand that when I was a little child and my grandmother died and I was unable to think subjectively. I was unable to think in other people's terms and I didn't understand that Granny was gone, eh.

And I remember looking at her, you know, and everybody was crying and I couldn't cry I was just - she looks like she's sleeping. And after taking psychology and thinking about my great-grandmother's funeral, I, it's kind of neat, like with the innocence, I guess, of my childhood and... but I have beautiful memories of her. I remember standing by the lake and holding her hand and staring out over the water and I remember my great-grandfather - he lived till - oh, he'll come back yet later on - but me and him we..... he used to take me on walks and then I wanted to tell about this too because it's very important in my life. My great-grandfather, although he was Catholic, he had the rosemary and the holy water, he would take me out to the bush and I would check the snares with him and like, I remember the first time he took me out I was, like, four years old, man.. and he said "Do you want to go for a walk?" and I said "Yeah, okay". "We'll get some rabbits. "Okay". and he took me on a ten mile walk. (Laughter) We got back and the sun was starting to get low and we left early and I'll never forget that though because we walked for miles and I remember the trail. This is in the middle of nowhere but he had checked this snare line, like where he had put his snares, so many times that there was actually a trail. And I remember him telling me to walk behind him because you only want to walk in one little path because you don't want to destroy any of the plants. There is no reason to be walking all over the place - just walking the path that was there. And I remember saying "Why grandpa?" and then he stopped and looked around. My grandfather only had one arm - his other arm was very crippled with polio and he pointed at all - a bunch of different plants there were around us and he said these are medicine and you can't step on them because it is disrespectful. And he started, just the little area we were in, to pick all these different little leaves and stuff and musket (?) tea and all these different, I guess, known as Labrador tea, and like all these different things - like this is medicine - this is what this is for and that.

So, my summers at that age, were good.

M: And how long did you spend there and do you remember going back?

A: Oh, weeks - I used to spend weeks out there, yeah. I'd spend a couple of weeks on the trap line and then a week on the reserve.

M: Until you were what age did you do that.

A: Six and then it stopped. Quit around there. But...Yeah, my last summer going up there was kind of sad because grandmother had already been gone for a couple of years and I was excited to see my grandfather....Seven, seven years old. I was so excited to see my grandfather; unfortunately he got stricken with Alzheimer's.

M: Oh, no.

A: So when I arrived he didn't remember me and after all the years of my life there, he didn't know who the hell I was. That's what he said, eh, "Who the hell are you"? and I was just destroyed and crying and after a couple of hours though, he remembered me and he's like "Oh, my boy, come here, Sit on lap." and he gave me a big hug and I remember those bristles and rub his cheek on me - oh man, get out of here. He passed away when I was eight years old. Unfortunately he died in the Health Science Centre and the whole time he was dying he kept telling them - he completely had forgotten, completely forgot, English which, I don't know, I guess had to do with the Alzheimer's or something but he didn't speak English so my Aunties all had to be there and my Granny and to talk them in Cree because he understood Cree and he was speaking Cree, but he either wouldn't, or didn't, remember English but he wouldn't talk to the Doctor's or anything. The only thing he kept saying was Take me back to - that's where I want to die - I'm supposed to die in .

Now I wanted to tell you about him and my great-grandmother because that was a big part of me coming to be who I am today And because even though there were colonized, even though they were Catholics and all that stuff, they were still a totally hard-core Indian people and I'll remember that walk we took in the bush and telling me why we had to walk in a single file and about the medicines and I also remember him telling me about how every morning a woman asked him, "Why do get up so early every morning - how can you get up at the crack of dawn - to smoke his pipe - not a traditional pipe but like a pipe - and he'd tell me "Oh this woman comes and wake me up every morning" and I said "well, who is she" and he goes Oh she's very old. and I'd say who is she - how come I never saw her. Well, she comes in my dreams. I said "Really" "Yeah" "Well where does she come from" and he said "You'll understand some day just by that". And I said "Okay". and then he said "The day she doesn't come that's when I'm going to go see your kookum (grandmother) and then I won't wake up. I didn't understand at that time but... and the creepy thing was that I remember one morning like we had a little cabin there'd be like five of us on a single bed - the kids, eh, you know and all my aunties and everybody sleeping on all these beds in the cabin and I remember one morning and when I woke up I swear to God, I... the door of the cabin creaked, like really loud and I woke up and I looked up and I had sleep in my eyes and stuff but I swear I felt..ah, I saw there was nothing there..but I felt something come across the cabin and my grandfather kind of went "Uhhh, uh huh...okay" and he got up - just sat up and I got all scared and I lied down and I fell asleep. And I woke up about, maybe, an hour later, and he was sitting there in his chair - in his rocking chair, smoking his pipe and he was sitting right beside my bed looking at me, smiling and he started laughing at me when he woke up and I looked up at him because he knew, eh. He knew I'd saw him and I wanted to tell you about that because it just showed me how close that I am to what we are. You know how we're not that far away from it; how it hasn't been thousand of years of separation from closeness to land, or closeness to our traditions.

M: and that it's not lost.

A: Exactly. Exactly. It's cloaked. And those are my summers of my first few years, was up there, like eating berries until I puked, eating fried bannock on the campfire and that kind of stuff...moose meat and everything, eh.

M: So your grandparents even though they died when you were really young, had a really significant bond

A: Huge

M: Impact on your life.

A: A huge impact. Those were my great-grandparents. My grandparents are still alive.

M: Okay, so it was your great-grandparents.

A: Yeah, my grandma lives here in the city. My grandmother and my grandfather are quite the interesting scenario. They were part of my city winter life. They had a very violent relationship. We'd go visit granny and grandpa and they were always drunk.

M: and fighting.

A: every fuckin' day, man, those guys were pissed. My childhood, granny was pissed and same with my grandfather. My grandfather comes from , south-end . My grandmother she comes from

M: and these are your mom's mother and dad.

A: Yes, yes. And they lived in the city while I was a child and so I guess my child, child year's was very violent because of the father I had, my mother's spouse, - he was really violent and my grandparents, they were always violent and like and my uncle he's my age. He's in now and serving 10 years. He was just a young child like me back then and he lived with them. And I remember we used to always go play with him over there and they'd always be drunk and grandpa would be up on the TV with his guitar and, you know, singing a . And they'd always be fighting and my mother would always get into fist fights with my grandmother and that's how we'd always leave, you know when granny and mom started fighting.

M: You and your mom were back together again - when did that happen?

A: Well, in there was some hardships there for me. I had gotten molested by my father's little sister who at the time was fifteen.

M: So she would have been your auntie.

A: Kind of.

M: Well, sort of.

A: Sort of yeah. Yeah, I called her auntie 'cause you know I called father. She was baby-sitting me and I guess there were a few occasions where she molested me - like sexually. And I guess that's where I began to learn guilt because as a small child - this was back again, like rewind, I was 4 or 5 years old, my, ah.... his mother I developed a very close relationship with - she told me to call her mom.

M: 's mother wanted you to call her mom.

A: Yeah, everybody calls her mom though...like everybody, like her friends, everyone called her mom. She's a woman - so you can imagine - I don't know if you anything about the culture but their women are very, uh, they wear the boots.

M: Yeah, they're powerful.

A: They're a maternalistic society and it's apparent in every woman, even the non-traditional women, they're very aggressive and very domineering. It's just an inherent trait that most Mohawk women have. They're very - you know what I mean.

M: Yeah.

A: They were like that traditionally too, I mean, they ran the communities, they made all the decisions, you know, they wore the boots. And it was very much the same with her family so everybody called her mommy and what it happened was - I don't remember when I lived in . He was out with my Auntie - you know, doing that thing. And they had been involved sexually and that kind of thing while my mother was in the hospital.

M: So, did you have some awareness of that when you were..you know were in....

A: No, I think I blocked in my _____ and I didn't want to accept it.

M: You must have really missed your mom then.

A: Oh yeah, I cried all the time but that's how Mrs. or mom kind of capitalized on me. She became mom for the time being.

M: Yeah.

A: Really she'd be the one there holding me at night when I'd cry. She'd be the one waking me up in the morning, cook me breakfast, take me to daycare, take me to

market to buy fish, you know, all kinds of stuff, eh. But I guess when I got molested by her daughter, [redacted]'s sister, I kind of learned guilt because I had told Mrs. [redacted], eh, that your daughter is doing this to me, my auntie's doing this to me and I don't think it's right. And she freaked out and she beat [redacted] half to death with a baseball bat in front of me and that's when I figure...nowadays when I think of it, when I reflect on it I know now that's where [redacted] got his violence from. Because I remember that there was blood everywhere - Like she beat that girl... but no cops were involved.

M: Right.

A: It was kept in the family.

M: Right.

A: She told me that I could never tell [redacted] or anyone...

M: what happened

A: Exactly, that mom had dealt with it and this was the end of it and nothing would ever happen to her baby again. But you cannot say anything. This is closed, you know, so I... there was no healing component in there so obviously they left some scars and upon our return back to [redacted] just shortly after my mother came back to sanity like almost instantly. Just one day she clicked and it was like..Oh my kid I better be a mom again. and you know, brought me home. Uh, we... my mother kind of separated from [redacted] for awhile you know they didn't live together. We got a place on [redacted] Avenue and she, because of the fact that [redacted] was like fucking my other auntie while she was insane, eh...

M: Yeah.

A: She was kind of upset about that.

M: So she knew.

A: Oh yeah and she didn't blame my auntie though. My auntie was only 15 then; my father, [redacted], was 27. So there was serious sickness there, eh. [redacted] had a taste for young girls and [redacted] had worked in a group home here outside of the city where young teenagers, young adolescent males, out by the mint. It was a farm and while my mother was separated from him he would take me for weekends and there were girls there to at that time and again I was molested..

M: Where.

A: Because of [redacted] and his shenanigans and not being there. Because he was having sexual relations with one of the youth that was detained at this facility - one of the girls. He was never around and I remember like being a little kid and running

around this farm and the boys that were locked up on this farm were all guilty of molesting children.

M: Yeah.

A: And uh, and uh, so I was raped there by a white kid and uh to this day I hope, I hope, I find him, eh. Like not for violence sake, like for years, eh, I thought.. you know, you white mother-fucker I'm going to fuckin' gut him but I'd like to find him now and just have a chat with him and say, you know, like uh are you still doing this? Do you need help? because if you don't I will cut you like a pig, you know.

M: Yes

A: You know, you know, just in case he is still preying on people eh. Because I'm a firm advocate of people closing the doors of the past..like rape victims and stuff but, you know, pressing charges even after 20 years, you know, just to ensure that if they are still doing it that those people stop. I don't like it when people don't report those kinds of things because it just contributes to the system oppressing us, you know. Even it doesn't work for you that claim might work when somebody else comes for it. You know what I mean.

M: That's right.

A: So some day I hope I find this kid. But yeah, he raped me there in the shed at that farm and wasn't around and I remember, I remember running back to the farmhouse with my pants around my ankles and uh, the interesting thing about that particular situation was that memory didn't come back to me for years.

M: You forgot it.

A: I had a memory for years, a fabricated memory of, I had a fabricated memory of uh, of uh, him attempting and me getting away, eh. But know that I remem..., and then and then and then - I never talked to anybody about it, eh except for maybe in, in the ceremonies and that kind of thing - where you are just healing and I remember, yeah, I was assaulted and I never did get away and when I was running to the house, I had my pants around my ankles. But that boy disappeared very quickly and R never told my mother.

M: and you told

A: Yeah. He never told my mother and I.. a couple of years later or a year later me and my mother moved to a house on Avenue off . I told her and was living there again and she freaked out eh..she freaked right out and I told her about , the girl in and she freaked out, eh.

M: So what's that like telling your mom what happened to you.

A: I felt guilty, I was a little kid, I was like 6 years old - or 5 years old.

M: Yeah, as if you did something wrong.

A: Yeah. I was 5 years old.

M: So it was more like confessing... these things that happened to you.

A: Yeah, 'cause Mom told me never to say anything and told me never to say anything. It was dealt with. So I had learnt guilt from those people, eh, you know.

M: Yeah.

A: And the sad part about it was is that my mother thought she was a wicked mom eh. Although I mean like she had her psychotic episodes you know don't get me wrong eh, like she used to give me some wicked lickins', man. I wouldn't say she beat me eh but boy you know, she'd make me go get a stick and you know, But that was the normal thing back then, you know, like lickins' back in the early 80's and the 70's were like...

M: standard.

A: Standard, man you know. Of course nowadays, holy shit, you hit your kid with a stick you fuckin' toast but CFS will intervene or whatever but back then I mean you know, getting a spanking with the belt or the shoe, I mean, that was normal for us to see a mom chasing a little Indian kid with a shoe - Get back here, _____, you know, like. But she was a good mom though, eh, taught me a lot of truth. She always told me to be very truthful and anybody do anything I don't like, say it. I don't like this and I want you to stop. So for a while there at when I was 5, my father got abusive again and that's when I, I think that's when I became extremely calloused.

M: Hardened.

A: Yeah - to violence. 'cause - and I remember the exact day when it happened when I stopped caring, when I stopped being like, holy smokes there's violence. My father stormed in the house and I was sitting there watching Saturday morning cartoons and I'm pretty sure something happened to my mom after that too, eh, 'cause she kicked my father out that day and that's when she got really violent towards me.

M: So it was a turning point for both of you.

A: for both of us. Yeah, my mother was in the bedroom and they were fighting. I guess they had fought earlier in the night when I was in bed and I got up to watch cartoons, you know, it was Saturday morning and he came in and was banging on the

door of her bedroom and the door was right here in the Living room and the stairs to my bedroom were right here beside it and TV was right here, eh, and the kitchen was down that way and the front door was right there, and back then they made doors like thick, you know, like in houses, character home, eh, and she wouldn't open the door so I watched get progressively more and more angry until he fuckin' shattered that door with like a punch and a kick and the door was in splinters and then he beat the shit out of my mother in her bed there and left, you know. And when he left I went and looked at my mom and she was like all bloody and the sheets and I sat down and I made airplanes out of the splinters of wood, you know. Sticking them together and flying them around. Remember playing with those airplanes that I made out of the broken door and then my father came back in and he was crying and puts me on his lap and I said "Daddy can you buy me some glue so I can glue these airplanes together, eh"? So I can fly out of here and I remember saying that, eh. And I really started crying and he's like well, I'm sorry my boy. It's just that mommy gets me so mad nah.. nah.. nah.. nah...nah. and I said I don't care - that's fine. And I remember he kind of looked at me, eh, like, excuse me !! and I said I don't care. Okay, and that was it and I didn't see him for like, for like a year.

M: and you changed at that point.

A: Yeah, that was it, eh. And I entered kindergarten the following year. We moved from to . My mother entered the . It's closed now - it was a huge psychiatric facility but it's closed now. Now it's just a bunch of old character buildings. But my mother entered the school there - the School of and we had moved to to get away from and that's why I hadn't seen him, eh. And my mother - I guess I should give you this story too though when I tell you my mother changed. Before we left that house of Avenue I developed a real serious fear of flushing the toilet - I thought it would suck me down. So I used to take my poop out of the toilet and throw it outside.

M: Because you didn't want to flush.

A: Yeah, and then I remember one time there was a good cartoon on and I didn't want to run outside and throw my poop out so I reached in there and I hid it under the cupboard.

M: Okay.

A: And well my mother freaked out, eh. And she beat me that time and I remember she never hit me like that before. She beat me with a plunger to the point I was bleeding, like my lips were cracked and shit. Then she threw me in the tub - like you know, in the hot water and it was just red with blood and uh, and uh...for hiding my poop under the cupboard, eh. And that's when I kind of figured that there was something wrong, something changed with my mother too eh. She was fucked up. You know, and right after, almost immediately after that, I really don't have much memory but all of a sudden we moved to . You know, I remember we were involved in the Church at

the time. My mother getting into , eh, it was real big back then. And uh, and uh, man - they're a fucked up church. (Laughter) She took me to a ... the 's moved us to and these missionaries loaded our furniture up in their truck and moved us to B and my mother, I think, she went to the University of for a year before she went to the School of . And was weird like, uh, was really weird it, uh. I just went to... I went to about 20 schools in , eh, we moved every three months and I went to like every elementary school in that damn city and I got my first suspension from school in kindergarten because I broke this kid's face open with a Tonka Truck, eh. Because that's when the violence started to show in me, eh. And my kindergarten teacher was a racist bitch, eh, like there's only one Indian kid in the class other than me, eh and he didn't look Indian, eh. And in me I had long braids, eh, like I had hair down to my ass, you know. Long braids, I was this cute little Indian kid. And I remember my teacher, she, her name was Mrs. and I remember when I was bad she used to make me stand in the garbage can. And in the corner eh, like in the garbage can and she'd get the whole class to stand up and she'd say "Why is A standing in the garbage can, class" and the class would say recite "because A is garbage" (like all the fuckin' kids, eh).

M: That must have been awful.

A: Yeah, it was fucked up man. To this day I can't believe that, you know. Because I used to eat the glue in art and the paste. Eat it like it was soup, man. (Laugh) And she'd always make me stand in the garbage for it, eh. But I didn't really care because I don't know I love the shit. It was good, man. It'd eat it eh because it was just some pasty like I don't know like grain or something, just some kind of mulch and it tasted like baby food, eh. You know what kind of glue I'm talking about. it really,,it smells like oatmeal or something so I'd eat all the time and I'd get in shit for it, eh. And I remember one day I finally lost it - I was playing with a Tonka Truck and this other kid took it from me, eh, like really meanly, eh, so I walked up to him and I grabbed it back and said "Hey man I'm playing with that, eh. And my teacher saw me grab it from him and she said "You give that back to him, A. And I said "Hey I had it first, you know" and I said it just like that, eh. Like I talk like I talk now when I was like five. I had a really good vocabulary back then, I used to freak my teachers out. And she said "No, he had it first, give it back." And I said, "Actually I had it first and he took it away from me and you just saw me take it away from ...take it back from him. You did not see the whole picture. And she told me I'm going to send you in the corner over there if you don't give that back to him. And I freaked out and I said FINE and I took that garbage truck... you know those Tonka Toys they used to make back then, they were made out of steel.

M: Yep.

A: Yeah, well I took it and I smashed that kid's face with it, eh. God it was horrible, eh. Like I'll never forget that. Like the kid was ffft..., like I think I KO'd him. And there was blood everywhere, eh and then I got kicked out of school. (Laugh) I got kicked out of school for a few days there and they made me start getting psychological - I started my first therapy sessions in kindergarten.

M: Yeah, when you were just a little guy.

A: I was in therapy and I don't remember therapy though when I was kid. I have no memory whatsoever. My mom just told me and said Yeah after that you went to therapy for the rest of kindergarten.

M: Do you remember feeling angry?

A: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. I was pissed off because my father left me. Even though he beat my mom and he beat me all the time I loved him. And he disappeared for a year - my whole kindergarten year he wasn't around. And then I entered grade 1 and he showed up. He came back. He moved to actually and started the School of where my mom was going. Talk about psycho-stalker, eh. And for awhile there I used to go stay with him, I used to go stay with him and my mother had got together with a series of men and she was very promiscuous at the time. She got into drinking - she had an opportunity to party because of me, eh, and now that I was at the age, you know, six where I could, I could, uh, be on my own, eh, like I was left at home I was cooking full course meals by the time I was five when we first moved to . And she worked full-time and went to school full-time so she wasn't there much but the time she was there it was quality time. We'd go to movies and do all kinds of stuff but I was a latchkey kid.

M: So, in a lot of ways when you were little, you really knew how to take care of yourself but you were still little.

A: Oh yeah.

M: And people still had power over you.

A: OH Yeah, yeah, yeah.

M: But you did the best you could for yourself at the time.

A: Yeah, you know, I had no siblings to take care of or to take care of me so I was pretty independent then. When I went to Grade 1 I had another racist teacher again. It was such a fuckin' annoying thing because Miss was this crazy woman who would have to come to to buy her clothes. She was scary eh. She'd duck to get into the classroom. You know, this big woman, man, ooh. And she used to shout at me all the time. Like I got kicked out of school again in Grade 1 because I stabbed a kid in the head with a pencil. And I don't even remember why I did - I think he wouldn't be my reading partner.

M: You were angry and it was just coming out all over the place.

A: Yeah, so I ended up doing that. School was a nightmare for the first two years though. It didn't work out too good. But after my father came back into my life things were cool for awhile except for to the fact that he started coming around again and trying to fight my mom, eh. But it was so much different because she was, you know, her own woman now and no matter what he did it didn't affect her, eh. She just - I remember seeing her - "Fuck you, . Go ahead, hit me - I'll fuckin' just come and get you when you're not looking. I don't care anymore." You know, like there was no more power control issue there. She was now his equal and I remember understanding that as a child, eh. And like just, ...weird. And my mother met a fellow - there was actually a documentary that made called or something like that. A lot of native women get together with men in because of the base and my mother was one of them. She met a fellow named and they fell in love. H was a great guy and when showed up on the scene, disappeared forever. I remember he sat me down one day... but not without a fight, like fuck, he used to take me over to his house. He bought all this sick promotional material on 's. And he used to sit there with me for hours and at like six years old and make me research like what the 's did to the . And he had all these horribly graphic pictures of the concentration camps and men killing them and all the different ways they did it and he was a really sick fucker though. That guy was a really sick guy. I remember one time I got into a horrible accident on my bicycle and my whole arm was a big scab, eh, and he used to - he sat me down one time and he still had the philosophy of beats up???, eh, and he cut my scabs off with a scalpel

M: Oh no.

A: And dumped alcohol on it and I was ..like holy fuck...

M: How old were you?

A: Six. And he saved them in a box. He had a box of scalpels and scabs and alcohol in his bedroom and like I didn't want to go over there because the damn thing never healed, eh. He'd always do that, eh. And he did the same thing to himself though, eh, if he ever had a scab. He collected scabs, he was kind of weird that way. But he'd sit there and make me read all this crazy shit on 's and tell me that what's your new dad is.

M: Yeah.

A: And he attempted to go to court and get custody of me but there was not a chance - he was not my real father, eh.

M: Right.

A: And in the courtroom he said to my mother - I'm not going to be in this child's life then if I can't be the total controlling father. And he used those words, eh, so that was, that was the end of . The total aggressive person.

M: Forever.

A: Ummm, yeah, pretty much so. He came into my life a few times later, eh, but I didn't trust him.

M: Yeah.

A: It was kind of always like Hey, how're you doing? and I...

M: Years, I guess, had gone by,

A: Yeah, and the anger developed as I got older, eh.

I'll get back to him though when I'm about 17 and the beautiful healing thing with him. And kinda ended it, eh.

But stayed in my life then. He and my mother got married and the next few years are a blur, like from seven to twelve we lived in , then we lived in a small hick town called and a beautiful farm house for awhile. You know they were going to buy it with a huge property and you know, we'd go ski-dooing in the winter and all this - so we spent 8 months there in the winter. And again

M: How did you feel about ?

C: Fuck, I loved him. Well as I got older. I mean when I was six he took me to you know right after left my life he took me and my mom to and was close to my mother and like I'd spent Christmas in , man. And we hung out in and holy shit man. It was like Yah this guy's _____ and he bought me all kinds of stuff, eh and he was really nice to me. And he cooked breakfast every day like wonderful breakfasts and wonderful dinners like _____ and sauerkraut and all these things. And he was only 20 when he met my mom.

M: And he was good to you and your mom.

A: Yeah. But unfortunately all fairy tales come to an end and he cheated on her - so my mom turned around and cheated on him and they fought and this and that. And what ended up happening was when I turned twelve it was around Grade 5 or 6 I guess. I failed Grade 5 to, eh, that was devastating. Anyhow with H - my mother finally got pregnant. They were trying for years, she got pregnant and during that pregnancy that's when times got rotten. She was unattractive I guess so he began to go around, sleep around and they almost separated eh. They almost got a divorce and after that we they made a choice and said let's get out of this town, get out of . Let's get away

from all the trouble - let's move to . The economy is booming there, it was in '89 or '88.

M: Yeah.

A: economy was insane. You know, come to ., come and work. Make money, you know. So they both sent out applications and my mother was a psychiatric nurse now and he was a heavy duty mechanic. He'd done his term in the army and was now a landed immigrant and my father got a job in a town called and my mother got a job in . So they made the agreement that her and my new born baby sister and me would move to work for a year, live for a year and would move to and work for a year and establish everything and then we'd all move in together at . And so we moved to that was probably the most depressing time of my life. I went from a healthy 120 lb. 13 year kid to 190 lb. and I had no friends in the whole year I was there other than this asshole that just beat me up all the time.

M: It was so lonely.

A: Oh, fuck man. It was like ahh....all my friends are my family, you know my little cousins I told you about. They lived in and those were the kids I grew up with. I mean I had some friends from school but most of the time I would spend it with my cousins. Every weekend they'd sleep at my house and play Nintendo, you know. And they were a big part of my life, life every birthday was spent with my cousins. There were no friends at my birthday, eh. Just cousins.

M: Family

A: Yeah, exactly. And when we moved to that was all gone. I had no supports and I had no friends and I really began to understand racism. You know, at that school I was in at . my principal was a blatant racist. I remember at one point he had got me into his office to interview me and he asked me "Do you feel insignificant or lesser of a human being than the other children because you're Indian?" and I freaked out eh. I remember going, What? and he asked the question again and I told him "Are you totally fuckin' dumb?" and he's going "Excuse me" and then he pulled his rank and he said "Don't you talk to me like that, young man, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah. Well that's a fuckin' racist question, you jerk, You know, I want my mom here, you know, this is totally sick and I freaked out on him, eh. I said "Listen here bub, I don't know what you mean by lesser of a human being or disadvantaged. I said I got everything I got cable - I got Super Channel. You know (Laughter). I got Nintendo with 30 games, okay. Look at my Nike Airs. I got everything. And then my mother came in and she fuckin' she almost beat him, she freaked right out. She said "Look I work damn hard for my child and he lives a good life and he has everything he wants. You know and I try to provide him with good morals and a firm understanding of his identity and this and that, everything, you know. And I really truly understood what racism was after that point. I really did, eh. Before it was just kind of an icky feeling that I didn't quite understand, but after that point

I understood that people are racist and racism is wrong. And then I began to realize that the kids around me were all like racists - all the white kids that were cool and all the girls too. I mean yeah, I was a fat little pig - like I was really fat - like I was only 4 foot 11, eh, and 190 lbs. so you can imagine what happened. Because I lived on donuts and pizza and you know, mom worked late hours and I always baby-sat for her and watched Super Channel and she gave me 20 bucks, you know - order chicken, order pizza. So, uh, was a nightmare. That's all I can say about that place.

M: So were you there for what you had planned... for the one year. Did you guys all move?

A: Yeah and then me and mom and , we all moved to which was a treat. It was beautiful - it was in the mountains. is the asshole of . - there's no s there. It's right on the border of , eh, so it's just . It's all farmland and it's ugly, it's ugly as hell and the architecture there and everything is just - there's nothing inspirational in that town at all. Except the creek in the middle of the town, it's pretty there but other than that I mean it was a nightmare there, eh.

M: So that would have been Grade 6 for you.

A: (Laughter) No grade 7, no grade 6. I remember it was grade 6 because I was doing grade 6 and I failed Grade 5 twice and then I did grade 6 and then I was so excited to go into Junior High because the system here is, you know, Grade 7 you're in Junior High. I was so excited because I had been left behind by all my friends and I had worked so hard to get up in the social order in Grade 5. I was so cool. Or know, it was Grade 6 I was so cool, you know and then we moved to this other town in where Grade 7 was part of elementary school which was different. Elementary again....ahhh and I passed regardless and we moved to and ah, ah, I went to. No that was...was that Grade 6. Yeah, it was grade 6 because then Grade 7. I passed Grade 6 in and Grade 7 in was still elementary, that was still elementary - I went to Elementary School. And anyway that was horrible too - people were, people were assholes there.

It was pretty though because the mountains were so inspirational to me - like they were so, I didn't care, I didn't care about nothing because I lived in the mountains, eh. My father was being cool, you know, he was being a nice guy. Anyway him and my mom were getting along. We lived on in this house on Crescent outside of the city down a road called where there was a trailer court and a small community and they were happy, you know, we had a fireplace and they would always sit by the fireplace and drink wine. You know it was good eh. And uhm and uh, half way through Grade 7 I was still pretty depressed because all the kids were teasing because I was so fat. You know, I was this geeky fat kid in the school and... my mother and father ran into some problems and they separated And so me and my mom moved downtown in and got our own house. After well we were in a transition centre, a crisis centre for about a month when she left him. and we went to live into, we got a nice little house and I went to a school called Hall. Hall was all right, but I was still the fat kid though. So it

kind of sucked. (Laugh) I was still the fat kid and my mom saw that I was depressed, eh. So one day she sat me down, this was when I was fourteen I think. Yeah, I was 14 then. She sat me down and she said "You know my boy I love you; and I was eating a donut and with my mouth full, I said "I love you too mom." (Laughter)....I'll never forget that day because she said "but do you know what", "what's that mom?" You're really fuckin' fat and it's not healthy eh. and I looked at my donut and I started crying eh, she hurt my feelings, right.

M: Yeah.

A: She said I'm telling you this my boy because I taught you to be honest and that I should always be honest to you and you should be honest to me. And then she said "I've got to put in to Swim Club". and I said "Swim Club" and she said Yes, you going to go into Swim Club now and be a swimmer and a racer. She said You've always been good at swimming. So I said Okay. And you know, I had already done all my swimming lessons up to Lifesaving already - I was already almost a Life Guard.

M: Well

A: So she put in a Swim Club so I became a Swimmer. And I'll never forget, the first day I went swimming I had these big shorts that went passed my knees, you know and I tried pulling them way up and my love handles were hanging and big breasts hanging to my belly and I walked out and there in front of me was this other little fat guy and we were in the new group, the _____ group, and all the really fast guys were in the other lane. We were with all the young kids, eh. And I looked at him and he looked at me and I walked up to him and said "Who are you?" My name's _____ - who are you. I'm A. He's like, phhft and I went, phhft. And that's when I meant my brother _____ I call him my brother because he is my closest friend, eh. and we kind of share a story together. We excelled in swim club, me and him, we raced each other, we had an instant relationship, instant sibling rivalry. His brother, he had a big brother who lived back here in _____, in _____, actually. He was from _____ we bonded automatically too because we were both Cree. We're both from _____.

M: You found a kindred spirit.

A: Yeah, he's from YF. His mother too pulled the same thing too. Left _____ to get away, eh, with a new husband and left their problems behind or so they thought. So our lives had been identical, eh and we actually it ended up that we didn't realize how closely it was, that one of the women that my father cheated with on my mother whilst she was pregnant with my sister, was his auntie. Talk about a small world, eh.

M: Yeah.

A: All across the country, and who do I meet. My father almost shit when he met, when he met _____'s mom. And I think that's what actually contributed to my mother and

fathers' splitting up was that after my parents met _____'s parents. You know, my mother - well the wounds were reopened and she ended up becoming good friends with _____ though, eh because they could talk in _____ and there weren't that many _____ women in _____, eh. And me and _____ became amazing swimmers. In a matter of a year, I grew a foot - from 4 ft. 10 to 5 ft 10 and I lost like 40 lbs. so I went down to a trim 140 and I became fanatical about sports and _____ got most improved rookie of the year and I got the other big award in the year from the club - most (he got best rookie of the year and I got most) improved swimmer of the year - the two best awards, eh. And we were just head to head still eh and we went to swim clubs and we started to compete and things were good and then _____ left. His mother moved to _____. Before he had left though we had an interesting experience together. Like because of our relationship being so close like when I say we were advanced at swimming, like we were really advanced. Like we had excelled faster than any swimmers the club had ever experienced. Like within a year we were in the top ranking swimmers in the club, there is a 100 members and within a year we were in the top 20 competing at swim meets.

M: (clapped)

A: Thank you very much. and we had both slimmed down a lot 'cause he was a little porker too and we were very, very happy about that and before he had left, we swam 12 times a week.

M: That's a lot.

A: Every morning at 5 in the morning - Monday to Friday. Saturdays at 6:00 in the morning and Sunday's we had dry land practice where we do calisthetic exercises like running, jumping jacks, and everything. And everyday after school, at 4:30 and each practice was 2 hours where we swam an average of 8 kms. per practice and ah, so our parents let us sleep over all the time, week nights, every night, because we were up every morning at 4:00, you know. Eating some raw spaghetti and going to swim. And school at that point to me was really insignificant because I didn't really hang out with people from school. I had no friends except _____.

M: _____ went to the same school you did.

A: No he went to a different school. Same thing with him, eh. Girls weren't really an issue yet. You know, we were young guys eh. We started to have crushes on girls and stuff but like he had a crush on girl named _____ and I had a crush on a girl named _____. But we never did anything about it. We used to like KISS eh, and we made a tape of that KISS song - Forever. Like there was like 30 hit recordings of it on one tape and we listened to it and hug pillows and scream out the girls we loved names, eh.

M: Oh, yeah.

A: And J had a Saiga and I had a Nintendo so we interchanged for sleepovers to play different games and not so much but me I excelled in school sports you know as well as swimming. We were really close though and uh - our first interaction with death - the loss of a loved one - not so much with me because I had lost so many damn pets in my life but 's dog died and that was his first time he ever dealt with death and he called me. "I need you man, my dog got hit by a car" and he had to scrap his own dog off the road. F was his name and we spent the night together and talked about death and we were still innocent that night and he left eh and a few weeks after that his mom got a job in . They moved to I was alone but I had to mention that dog dying because that was significant.

M: And what (decisions)? did you guys have when you were talking about the dog dying.

A: Just that people go. People go and things come to end. There is a beginning and an ending to everything and I guess we're going to die too some day, eh.

M: Yeah.

A: We went for coffee. 14 and we went for coffee - it's weird he, Like I've been a guy that's gone for coffee for a long time. (Laughing) And when left I was forced to make friends, like - to make friends. So I made friends but I finally entered Junior High - Grade 8. I went to and my mother moved to an apt. from the house we had lived. That was right across the street from the and I went to Jr. High and was afraid that I wouldn't have any friends but luckily the guys from my school they accepted me, eh. These were guys from my school so we kind of had our own click and the clicks were formed, eh. All the prettiest girls from all the different elementary schools formed their group and we called them the . And all us guys that were athletic formed our crew and we became the popular Grade 8's and sometimes the Grade 10's would interact us and it was (Grade 9's were insignificant, you know what I mean).

M: Yeah

A: It was cool.

M: And a big deal.

A: Oh, it was huge. And was in doing the same thing.

M: So did you guys keep in touch

A: Yeah, oh yeah. Our parents almost killed us over the phone bills and like, we were pretty choked about this. And actually lived in first. And In High I got even more compulsive, obsessive about sports - I was still in swimming - I had excelled... dropped out of swimming when he was in because their swim club

was so advanced, like they were competing in international tournaments on a regular basis - he dropped out, eh. And a new coach took over for our swim club - a racist son-of-a-bitch named [redacted] and I was the only Indian in that whole club, eh. And when he first took over and he sat me down one day and he said, "You know what, A - I'm going to be such a fuckin' asshole to you", and those were his exact words. And I said, "Why?" and he said "Because have you ever seen a fuckin' Olympic swimmer" and I said, "No". "Well you're going to be our first Olympic swimmer, Okay". "Because you're an Indian and not just some white boy, I'm going to treat you like shit and bust your balls." And although I appreciate his antics and his beliefs that I would be the, you know, that I would be the Indian Olympic swimmer, it was a little to rough for me to understand.

M: Yeah, too hard.

A: Yeah, and he wasn't lying man - he busted my balls and within two months of his coaching us I was one of the top 5 in [redacted].

M: Oh good.

A: Yeah, like ah I went to the [redacted] Games and I guess I just blew people away and I had qualified for the [redacted] Summer Games - so I was top 5 contender in [redacted]. There was 5 people picked from all the towns in [redacted] and I was one of them. And we went down to [redacted] Summer Games in [redacted] and me and my brother hooked up, [redacted].

M: Oh, good.

A: Yeah, went to watch symphony of fire ? together. And school was cool because sports I did good in. My grades sucked, I was getting like C's, you know, but I was passing. But I did really good in Sports, eh, and I qualified for like [redacted] finals and everything and I took like a bunch of 1st and 2nd's for long-distance running, shot-put, javelin.

M: So you were really into sports.

A: Everything yeah. Yeah

M: and doing really well.

A: Kicking ass, yeah.

M: So things really turned around then and you went into Jr. High.

A: Yeah, I got popular, eh. Girls, girls liked me. People were pairing up with girls and stuff. Didn't last long though because the homelife wasn't too stable and my father and mother made the decision to get back together but not before I had fell in love. My first love. Her name was [redacted]. She was a beautiful girl - she was the prettiest girl in the [redacted].

school. And nobody talked to her because she wouldn't talk to anyone. She was very shy and she came from a pretty fucked up home, eh. Her parents divorced, brother was like eh, eh. Brother was really oppressive, eh, big brother. And her mother was never there; she was a travel agent so she was always flying to like crazy places for like 2 bucks and like leaving the kids behind, eh. But I saw her one day in the hallway and I was like ahhh, and I was dating one of the popular at the time and I just fell for her - she was so pretty and I began to tell her that, eh. Like I was so obsessed with her that I just told her "I think you're beautiful" ...all the time, eh. She'd be like "Sure, Leave me alone. Who the hell are you, Who the hell are you". and I'm like "Does that matter, you know?" She didn't accept that eh.

M: Laughter...You were In Love.

A: At the thirty hour famine, okay, it's an event where all the students get to stay at the school and starve for 30 hours.

M: Yeah.

A: Fast in honour of all the starving people on earth and to raise money, eh and we pulled a scam where my mother was working nights and she told her mother she was going to the 30-hour famine and she came and slept the night at my place and we didn't do anything, eh. I wanted to but we didn't, eh. And we were just about to kiss at one point, eh and this girl that lived down the street from me, , she's one of my best friends, eh, and she was totally weird and her parents were totally wacko and they just didn't care what she did, eh. They were art freaks, like her mother was a writer and her father was an artist, that's what they did. And they just were really, really eccentric, eh, and she used to come over to my place at like two in the morning. It was like every day you know like I'd go whatever, and it was like "I couldn't sleep; let's play nintendo." and my mother was like working nights, eh. And I'd go "Sure" and we'd talk, eh. And right when I was about to kiss , fuckin' shows up. (Laughter) She shows up and I'm like "What are you doing here - upstairs". Are you sleeping with that girl you like or.... Like I thought you were going to the 30 hour famine. She's like "Why, that was too boring so I left; you're supposed to be there." And I'm like "oh", so she follows me upstairs. So we all sat there and we're like.... (Laughter)

And after that we just went to sleep you know we just went to sleep, and me and I remember lying and staring at her and oh, I just fell in love with her, eh, it was like puppy love. She was lying there and she was wearing my shorts and T-shirt and I just lie there all night staring at her. Well, she left in the morning, eh and you know things from there went fucked up. Like uh, I started dating her, instead of going to swimming, you know I'd go see her after school 'cause her mom was never home either eh. And uh, and uh, and plus I started getting into the party scene, you know like I started drinking and me and my buddy were always - we started smoking pot. You know, everyone thought we were so bad and me and were like, you know, listening to Zeppelin and The Doors and all these retro sixties things just came into style, you

know and everybody else were listening to Nirvana and Chilies and we were busy with the Doors you know like Iron Maiden and all this crazy stuff, smoking pot, eh. Yeah, we were cool.

M: Being cool.

A: Yeah, and actually everybody started to really fear us. And all the older kids who loved us - were like "Oh, you guys are cool - come to our party, you know". All the people in Grade 10 and even the people from Grade 11 and 12 in High School were "Hey, that's cool", like you know. We had pot and _____'s brother was in _____ and he would always get us pot or buy us uh.... he was in _____ for like 5 years so okay he was older and he could buy us booze and all kinds of stuff so we were set you know. Like my swimming deteriorated, I started smoking and uh the sports thing went down the tubes, you know and plus too, _____ was really getting on my case, hey like I went to a swim meet, a very crucial swim meet, it was for Pan Am - or the _____ Pan Am. And I was supposed to break the 30 mark for my 50-metre free style - the 32nd mark. And I had been doing it in swim practice, eh, like they were timing me and I was getting like 27 seconds to do two lengths. And I fucked up on my dive in the race and I ended up getting 30.008 or something - I didn't break the 30 mark and in front of the whole swim meet eh like my coach was like and when I got out of the pool I was like you know, and my coach said "What the fuck --- fuckin' stupid idiot" and like just really degraded me in front of the whole fuckin' meet and I told him man "Fuck you, man, I quit" I can't handle this anymore - this used to be fun but now I (here it sounds like it skipped or something)_?, which is a pity because I qualified for you know _____ (like that summer I would have gone) and I qualified for _____ - like big swim meets eh like I probably would have got to the Olympics, you know if things were different but I quit, eh. And when I quit Swim Club, that was the breaking point for me because I kind of learned hopelessness then. Like I kind of just, just kind of said Fuck it, I'm sick of this - I'm sick of people shitting on me. And I came to the understanding that I'm my own self - nobody is going to tell me what to do from this point on. Telling my coach "Screw you, I quit" was very empowering - even though it empowered me into the wrong direction, it was very empowering. And at that point my mother and father got together and we moved back to (couldn't hear too much noise).

M: And what grade would you be in.

A: I was still in _____ - at the end of Grade 8.

M: So a lot happened in Grade 8.

A: Yeah, I was still in Grade 8 and I was still going to school at _____, you know. There was a bus that went to _____.

M: Were you still with _____ ?

A: Huh! (very noisy)

M: Were you still with ?

A: Yeah. We weren't doing anything though, like we were just dating you know. We never even kissed but that was at the end of the year eh. And summer came - it came so fast that year and uh I made a bunch of friends where I used to live you know, all the kids grew up like me and made a bunch of friends there, hung out with them and we went for hikes in the mountains all the time. were my friends. They all just idolized me eh, because I was the bad ass.

M: mmm, hmhhh.

A: you know, smoking pot and all that stuff. And I had a girlfriend that was pretty. But I passed Grade 8 and I passed to Grade 9 and I went to things with my Dad got really bad though because of the fact that I had asserted my self-identity, my self-worth and everything. Nobody was going to tell me what to do and my father is and he is very stern, he is very - work for what you have - nothing is free in life.

M: He was very...

A: very

M: Yeah, so were you happy that was back.

A: Yeah, my little sister's dad, you know.

M: He was the good guy.

A: Yeah, I mean, shit, by then he had already taken me to and across the twice, driving and I mean because of my father I've been to , you know, to everywhere you can imagine. Because he likes to travel and he used to take me with him. And He took me to with him and he took me to a lot of places when I was growing up that I didn't mention but I liked him. He was good overall even though there was problems... But we began to physically fight though when my mom and him moved back together because and mom would fight, eh, and I would get involved. "Don't fuckin' talk to my mom that way." "You stay out of this" "Fuck you and all" and we started fighting eh. And then I tried killing my father uh one day and he came home drunk. He went out with the boys for a few after work and came home drunk and he was being an asshole and I told him right out "You're being a fuckin' asshole - look what you doing to your little girl" - you know to his own daughter, eh. was three years I think. She was a beautiful child, man, oh, she was cute. And then he freaked out, eh, and he chucked a 2 litre of 7-up at my head and he hit me right in the forehead with a 2litre, eh, and I like aawhh.... and I fell back and then I tried killing him, I took an axe

and tried to chop his head off and he got out of there and I almost got him and I planted that axe in the door of his truck and he drove away with the axe in his truck.

M: Boy you really lost it.

A: Oh yeah, I freaked right out, man, I freaked right out. And he came back and he put his, our camper on his truck and went and he went and lived in the campground until I left for the summer. Until I left for for the summer. I was coming home, eh. And I came back home that summer and I went up to - my reserve. The big return, 14, I hadn't been to for, since I was a little kid, eh. And all the old people remembered me - they were like "Ooh, I remember you when you were this big", and then I was tall you know whatever and it was Indian Days eh, Treaty Days, and I participated in all the events and I won like I won this, like there was a race, a swim race - first prize a 100 bucks you know. Blew those guys away, I was doing breast strokes and I was beating them you know. (Laughter) I just rocked everyone eh and then the long distance running race I placed 4th. There was some champions there though. Like guys travel from Treaty Days to Treaty Days for those running races and there like amazing runners. Like the guy who got first beat me by 5 minutes for the 10K run.

M: Oh my goodness.

A: Yeah, so you can imagine how good those guys are. But I got 4th place there and I don't know, I did good and then the interesting thing is returning back to () and I saw my father again...my real father.

M: Your real father.

A: Yeah. I, , is my father's name and he had shown up in my life 3 times prior to when I was 14 and those 3 times he'd shown up he'd hand me a \$100 and say "here you go kid, you look like me - I fathered you, go buy yourself something nice". And you know I saw my father there. And I hated him eh, - he was a loser. He was a big alcoholic, you know, and I found out the truth too - about the fact that I have 11 brothers and 6 sisters from my father. And I met some of them....fuck

M: So you felt what.

A: Oh, I was fucked up. Imagine growing up your whole life by yourself until you turn like 11 and you're little sister is born and you find out you have all this family that you never knew about. And I met three of my brothers that summer. I met . I didn't hang out with much, same with - just saw them and then they left but little I hung out with and I got a job at the local poolhall called . Me and my cousin, , we're serving subs and people that were - you know, we were making a killing, man, because all these drunks would come in. Give us a 50 & order a pizza and we'd give them back 10 and make like you know \$15.

M: uh,,,huh. Right.

A: They wouldn't know. We were rolling in cash and then my brother, little , we hung out a lot. He told me his life story. He grew up in gangs you know and did time in jail. My brother just got out - did 10 years for murdering his best friend over a mickey of alcohol. They lived a really hard life, man, all of my brothers from my father's side. And my Little got me totally, my little brother , my, my big brother "Little " (he was named after my father - little) He got me really drunk, eh. We got really drunk and stoned one day and then he left me and I stumbled around and ran into my cousin, , who was drunk too. And we decided to go get tattooed together so we went and got 8-ball tattoos on our shoulders.

M: MM....hmmmm.

A: We were bad, eh.

M: Yeah.

A: It was a big liberation for me because my mother wasn't there. I was on my own; I came back home to visit, you know. She sent me away. Travel to by myself and everything eh. And, uh, there was a lot of disappointment in because I heard a lot of tales about the abuses that were going on there and I had a girlfriend there. I forgot to tell you but when I left for my girlfriend dumped me.

M: .

A: . She was going to with her Mommy. and she broke my heart and dumped me on my birthday - my 15th birthday.

M: Oh no.

A: I think I was 15. Was that 15, yeah I was 15. And ooh I was heartbroken so I went to Manitoba with this like "I'm going to live and I'm going to do this and this and screw the world and screw the world, you know.

M: Yeah.

A: I'm a young man now.

M: Free.

A: Exactly. I was making money and that, you know, and I was hanging out with the Indian people eh at the reserve, you know. So it was cool - there was gas there and all kinds of good memories from that trip and then, and then, my mother showed up. She came after, eh. So I hung out with my mom for awhile and then she went back to

and I had decided to stay and go fight forest fires with my uncle. They snuck me on the crew, you were supposed to be 16 but I managed to get on anyway because my uncle was the crew boss. And I went out and fought forest fires and made a ton of cash and came back and then my new girlfriend, my Indian girlfriend, dumped me, (A laughs) She dumped me too.

M: Uhhh, huh.

A: And actually that was kind of a special thing because that was my first like real sexual experience with her. She was beautiful. Her name was ... She had long, long black hair and she was most prettiest girl on the reserve. Her name was . And she was just beautiful and she just totally seduced me and I didn't know what the hell was going on because I was so innocent, you know. And just out of the blue one night she said "Do you want to make love?" and I was like... cough, cough... "what, uhhh, I guess so, uhhhh - okay, let's go then" and all of a sudden it's like holy shit, oh my God I'm going to get laid. (Laughter)

And she made love to me and oh my God I'll never forget that. She did everything - and you know to a young guy and such a beautiful native woman - long beautiful hair and very voluptuous and beautiful. And yeah, the interesting thing about that is that her mother went to residential school with my mother and they were best friends growing up, eh, and so it's really significant.

M: All these circles eh - in your life....

A: Yeah and it was really weird eh like...she was dysfunctional though - like, way more than me. Like she was a rev. girl and there were a lot of fucked up things on the rev., eh. She was accusing me of boning some other girl on the rev. - it was my cousin.

M: Yeah.

A My cousin while I was there tried to sleep with me. and like I mean God, like, 3 of my cousins tried to get it on with me while I was there and like I'll never forget one night while I was there. Like I went to bed and I just wanted to sleep that night so I went and slept at my cousins' house and like, 3 girls, they were all related to me, tried getting in bed with me. And I literally had to pick them up and throw them out of the bedroom because they wouldn't leave me the fuck alone. So you can imagine my, like what the hell is the matter with these people. You know, like aaaah, because growing up in a predominately white society...

and then all of a sudden you're the new meat on the Res and then everybody is ripping at you even your own family. It was very bizarre. So my cousin told "I screwed your boyfriend" and she freaked out and dumped me. Well, it wasn't much heartbreak from that one though, but I still thought I'd mention her because she was really significant too because she was my first, you know like, sexual experience, you know. There was one before that but it was only like a second - like I didn't even - there was no ending - I just kind of went - (singing) doot, doot, ahhh" and like that was it eh. Before her, but hers

was the first time I ever had sexual intercourse with a women like right through - the whole thing so I wanted to mention her. And she comes back too - like really harsh. Uhh, after I left I came back across Canada by myself. I had a big wad of cash - I was all proud and my father was proud of me when I got back. This was the first job I had and him being German the first job is a big deal for a young man.

M: He valued work.

A: Yes, and like the fact that I did such a hard job. And I owed him some money too from the phone bills for phoning my brother and I gave him my pay cheque. And that made him.... he was proud for like he forgot the whole trying to kill thing....(laughter)....

M: and took the money.

A: and took the money and was very proud of me, eh. And gave me my birthday present with my....probably my first salmon fishing rod. I'm a crazy fisherman eh. My father is a fisherman.... by heart, by trade. All my brothers are fishermen - my whole family. means a place of fishing so I've always been obsessed with it, eh. So he bought me my first salmon rod and he was dreaming when I got back because we went fishing then and I caught a 24 lb. Cohoe Salmon which is record size. We went to the Sportsmen Anglers' Shop and we got it weighed and he was so proud of me and he was calling me his son and it was fuckin' cool.

M: Yeah.

A Like it wasn't always bad time with . My father was proud of me and that was a big accomplishment for me, eh. So I kind of behaved myself for a little while, but I had this seed inside of me. And that seed was the seed of addiction. A dormant monster called alcoholism, drug addiction.

M: Where did this come from.

A Well, I was born with it from my alcoholic father - it's a hereditary disease. And when I went all summer with no supervision at the age of 15, well fuck I was pissed every day.

M: Yeah. So you got into it then.

A I had done it a few times with my friends but when I had returned there was an actual urge - a hunger for alcohol and drugs.

M: Craved it.

A: Yeah, any time you get stressed out - oh, I'd love a drink right now, you know.

M: Yeah, you'd want that.

A: And weekends became serious partying. Within a month, you know, like within a month - September or whatever, or October and I was back at school and

M: So you reconnected with all your buddies.

A: Yeah... reconnected with all my buddies - none of them believed me about my summer. They were like Yeah, as if that happened to you - as if you were doing this and that and if you were nah, nah, nah.... and I was telling them about my crazy adventures like drinking on the train, with people I didn't even know and all these crazy things that happened. and they were all like yeah right, you know, small little mountain town. Yeah right, A, we believe you - like smoking dope with people on the bus ride back- like sure whatever you know. That was okay.

But when I returned I had an obsession with skate-boarding and I became a skater. Joined the clique of skaters and kind of left my old sports friends behind. And I became known as a skater and my girlfriend, , started to come around again. Started to call me - she'd see me as a skater with my cool skater clothes and like in that town of 25,000 - the skaters were the cool guys - all the good lookin' guys and my hair had grown long again, eh. My hair had grown to about here so I had this real, nice handsome look goin' eh. And the girls were very interested and like the sucker, I fell for again and we got together and you know, within the 2 weeks of us being together now that I had been laid, you know, we were having sexual intercourse and I fell in love with her. And to this day I still think of my first love and ahhh and I get this real nostalgic blast of romance. First romance and we dated - she was my girlfriend. Oh God, I got into a lot of trouble because of her. I'd sneak out to see her; she'd sneak out to come and see me. Not so much me getting into trouble to see her because I had a very free life ... my father tried to implement rules but it would be like...then I'd leave, you know, if it got to that point, you know. Well we'd have our blowup every 2 weeks and have a fist fight. It was back to the old thing after the holiday when I got back from - back to the old ways.

And my mother and him that was the end of it. She left him again. That was the final time they were together. I mean..and my mother got a place downtown again in an apt. and I was still in school and then with all the drugs and the alcohol that was happening in my life and the new girlfriend, you know, the whole feeling of growing up, I guess. And then also too, being an Indian and the racism that I was still dealing with living in a white logging town in and with all the controversy about the ??? NISKA - that's right by the Niska treaty eh. You know it's actually just 2 hours away and like that whole area is severe racism. And for that one year of grade 9 I got kicked out of High - my girlfriend broke my heart. I suspected she was going with some other guy behind my back and I knew the guy and being the sick guy I am I approached him and said listen.....his best friend was dating her best friend. Her best friend lived in a

psycho abusive home so that she always went to her house - basically, lived at my girlfriend's house. So her boyfriend would always come to my girlfriend's house and bring his best friend 'cause his best friend had nothing to do. And me being a skater was always out with my friends skating, smoking dope, being cool and then late at night I'd go see my girlfriend - they'd already be gone. So, the sad part about it was that the guy was a geek in terms of social structure, in terms of cliques and that kind of thing. He was real low on the barrel in terms of cool guys - he was a skater but he was considered what skaters call a poser. Never really skated - just carried the board.

M: Kind of like a wantabe.

A: Exactly. So it was damaging to my ego and it was damaging to my clique like my crew because they were all like - What the fuck man, we hear this shit about this guy. What's up with that? Kick that guy's ass....get rid of your girlfriend - what are you doing - man you know you're being a loser you know. And all this pressure, eh. So I didn't want to persecute her without just cause so this was the most horrible thing that I ever did - like that really fucked up my head. I approached that guy and I said "Listen I know you like my old lady" and then he was like, "No A, No." because I was reputed to be pretty violent, eh.

M: Yeah, right.

A: It happened like I beat guys up all the time eh fighting.

M: He would have been scared of you.

A: Oh he was freaking out eh. His name was . Like you know, like ...and I told him man I said I know you like my girl and I know you're going to her house tonight because I know sleeping over and I know that your buddy going over there too and I want you to try to make out with her. Don't sleep with her - I'll kill you if you sleep with her. See if she goes for it. And tell me so that I know - so that I can move on. He said, Okay, I'll do it. And this was my first heartbreak eh and because I loved that girl or what I thought was love back then - I was infatuated with her deeply. And the next morning ...I never went over eh. The next morning at school I walked in with my usual cool stride and my skateboard and big baggy pants. My girlfriend was at her locker and I walked up and I blew in her ear and she kind of turned around and went "Oh hi" and I was like Hi. How you doing and I'm just going to class. and she said Cool. And I said how was your night and she said Oh, it was okay. boyfriend came over and we just watched movies and I said Oh yeah. Can I have a kiss and she said "Yeah", and she gave me a kiss, eh, and right there I knew that she screwed around with the other guy because her kiss was different - you know a different style. Oh man, my eyes welled up with tears and I stepped back and I looked at her and I said holy fuck. And she said What, what. and I said Shit, man, you know, I hand you the poison apple and you fuckin' eat it. You're totally screwed chick - you bust it. Her face literally went pale and she like ah, ah with my attitude of a skater boy and I walked away. And that was my

first heartbreak. And I went and found that guy and pulled the little angry boy and I said "did you do anything" and he tried lying to me and he said No she didn't go for it" and I ended up I freaked out on him and threw him down the stairs and like really hurt him eh. And he didn't come to school and then I got expelled from High (Laughing) again.

M: More expels....mmm..

A: Yeah, and I changed high schools then. I went to where there was another crew of skaters that I was friends with because all the skaters hung out anyway - downtown you know and we all skated the same places. So I had friends there but what began to happen with me is I began to feel really antsy - like something was missing in my life and I began to not care at all about anything. I just wanted to get high and skate - I didn't...played hooky all the time, slept in - didn't care. And

M: How old would you be?

A: I was like 15 - almost 16.

M: So were you depressed again, do you think.

A: Yeah, I got really depressed - you know. Me and broke up a bunch of times - got back together. It's like the dumb kid you know, I go back - she'd say sorry.

And then my brother moved back. His mom got a job in - like 25 mins. west on the coast. And I was so happy and I'd hitchhike over there all the time - anytime I'd have a breakup I'd hitchhike to and we'd party it up and I'd forget about everything is a very violent town, eh. and we'd always get into fights and this and that. We got really heavy into the drugs - nothing harsh yet. Like we were just dropping acid and smoking dope, and stuff like that.

M: So you don't think dropping acid is a little harsh.

A: Not compared to chemical narcotics like hard core ones.

M: Right.

A: A lot of people say Acid's harsh but as I get on you'll understand.

So we played alot - we were older now. He went through his hardships - very similar to mine in , in and we were together again, eh. Bros, bros. to the end. And ran into some severe problems and started stealing cars. I started stealing cars with him. We kind....him and his brother, his older brother moved back home, they stole a van - got kicked out of their house, stole a van, stopped in to pick me up, they had 2 other guys with them. And as bad as I was, eh, I wasn't going to go to and make the big score ...they were going to to work in Chop Shops. Steal cars, drop them off

at Chop Shops, get high and they just stopped and wanted to pick me up and I said "Can't do it - sorry". And uh...I looked in 's eyes and I told him "Listen - my mom will put you in school. You'll know she let you with us until this shit with your mom blows over. Come on man don't go on this trip because you ain't coming back. You know it and I know it." and 's brother looked at me, eh and he was a big boy, eh and he looked at me like "Fuck you what are you trying to do". looked at him and said "No I got to go man - see you around". Okay - yeh I guess so. And that evening I got a call from my best in-town friend, , the guy who I grew up with listening to the Doors. And he said that on the radio that there had been a car accident with some youths outside of and that was killed and then, so I freaked out eh. I was fucked up like real bad and I remember I went ??? and like do you want to hook up now and I said yeah man I want to hook up like right fuckin' now - I'm fucked. Like I was so upset that my brother was dead eh. So we got together and pulled out this bud that he had been saving you know, time of a memorial. For as long as I can remember he had been saving this bud of pot and we smoked it and went to another universe. (laughter) And it was very similar to the conversation I had with about the dog. But this story has a happy ending eh, sort of, it's happy in a morbid sort of way. I tried to find out where was - when the funeral was - like over the next day and I freaked. and a week later I got a call and I was like "hello" and it was my brother He goes "Hey man" and I'm like " ", and he goes "Yo, man" and I'm like "What the fuck man - I thought you were fucking dead". And he says "No, I'm not, it was who died" - his older brother. And was just in the hospital - he had to get special reconstructive facial surgery and he had been driving and he fell asleep at the wheel because they smoked a bunch of hash and he fell asleep at the wheel and his brother was sleeping in the back. And they crashed and his brother broke his neck - died instantly. One of the guys they were with had something from the engine shoot through the dash of the van went through his stomach and destroyed his whole body. He survived though but he's like retarded now. And the other guy, little Japanese guy, got his arms, his legs, his neck, all of his ribs broken. My brother lost his teeth, shattered his jaw - like his teeth were in the steering wheel, eh. And that's when I became my brother 's big brother - I replaced - even though s older than me. And even though nothing was ever said about it to this day, I know that - he does anything I tell him to eh - and he respects my judgment - because I told him that day - I said "Don't fuckin' go on this trip - I got a really bad feeling about it, bro, you ain't coming back - don't do it - Just come stay with me". and I don't want to put the blame on him because it's not his fault - shit happens eh. But you know if he had come with me I mean, his brother would be alive today.

M: Mmmm,hmmmm.

A: So from that point on I became 's big brother eh. To this day I watch out for my brother you know, like he lives here in eh and like you know I'm busting his balls right now, made him get a job and stuff. He's cleaning himself up though - he's got a house - he's really pulling his shit together. But that conversation we had about the dog F compares this to that and a month later after me and wallowed our sorrows about with booze and drugs, I was at my house and my sister...I got a call,

eh, it was my cousin [redacted], and I had grown up with these 2 girls my whole life. Every one of those summers I told you about at [redacted] I spent with them. All those years at through elementary, they were the ones that I told you about that came and slept over. Every birthday party - they were at my birthday party - these two girls - I took care of them - I was their big brother because their big brothers went to live with their father in [redacted]. And I was really close to [redacted] eh, and she was my sister - she even lived with us for awhile. And I was sitting there doing the dishes one day and this is what you call flash-bulb memory in psychology. My memories of extreme remorse or whatever - you remember them - you even remember what you were wearing with, what the weather was like - flash bulb memory. That's what I have with [redacted] eh. I got a call and it was my cousin, [redacted] and my mother was on the phone - she answered it and she's saying "What. what"? and right there I knew. And I picked up the phone and said "What happened?" and she said "[redacted] is dead, and I said '[redacted] is dead'" and she said "Yeah" and I said "Well, that's just fuckin' great - So how did she die"? and [redacted] said "She just got killed today in a car accident". Her friend's car got hit dead on by a truck and she was in the passenger's side. She died of massive head injuries. And I flew to [redacted] that night eh...I flew to [redacted] and I took care to attend the funeral and provide support to the family. And I was pretty fucked though 'cause like that was my sister. My real sister - like the girl if I would have had a sister that would have been my sister. I have sisters - like I have my sister [redacted] but she didn't come to me until I was eleven. I've got sisters on my dad's side of the family but fuck I just met them.

M: You grew up with this girl.

A: [redacted] and I grew up with her, yeah, eh. And that's when me and [redacted] became suicidal subconsciously. I got back and that was it. We were doing crazy shit after that. We, you know with the death of his brother a month prior, and with the death of my sister that month, we drank ourselves to oblivion. I got into hard-core crime. I was breaking into people's home, robbing people, I got kicked out of my mother's house. And I managed to get my own place actually - I had my own trailer when I was like 16 and I spent a lot of time with [redacted] hanging out and I was really screwed up because I felt like well there's nothing...you know, [redacted] death drove me into why bother... By that time I got kicked out of [redacted], I got kicked out. I'll never forget the principal - he walked me off the.....I got expelled 3 days before the last day of school. You know what for... for stealing a fucking beef jerkey from the cafeteria. I got expelled for that. And when the principal walked me off...he's quite the gentleman, eh....he said "You know A I have this funny feeling about you ... you're going to make it somewhere and I'm kind of sad to see you go because you are quite the interesting character but I have to do my job". And I said "Thanks Mr. [redacted], you're cool, and I will go somewhere but just not for awhile". I shook his hand eh, I remember that day and he walked me right off the school grounds, eh.

And I went to another high school too an alternative one and I got kicked out of there too. Because of [redacted] - she came to the same school... And I don't know, I beat up a guy because she was flirting with him, and stuff in front of me and I lost it and I pulled a A - I

threw down the stairs. Laughter ...errr....everybody was afraid of me, man. I got expelled like from every High School in _____ (laughter) and had a couple charges with B.& E. on my record by that point and again _____ came into my life in the trailer - she moved in and at that point, my mother left _____ back home here to _____. I was 16 and late 16 and before she left though I got placed under arrest and charged with another B & E and because I was a minor the court either said the only way we're not going to get me locked up is if you go under house arrest, you know, with your mother and my mother was like Yeah, okay. So for a while there I was living house arrest with my mom and I lived in her basement for like 3 months and didn't see the light. I just sat there and drank and had girls come in and you know and I kind of left the trailer like there because my girlfriend ended up sleeping with my room mate and she boned everyone of my other friends too. All my friends that had told me "Oh you should get rid of her - they all ended up sleeping with her" and

M: That must have been really hard for you.

A: It screwed me up big time. Like I didn't respect women until I met my fiancée. Like I was really promiscuous throughout the years but I left ah when I was in that bode though of house arrest, my mom started taking me to sweat lodges. And the reason I bring this up is because it was pretty insignificant at the time - I didn't have any concept of traditional culture or anything at all. And I remember that one day we were making.. uh, I was helping the lodgekeeper built a sweat lodge....a new one and we were bending the willow down like this, eh, and I was pushing the bottom out and it had another guy pulling it down and the willow snapped and it hit me in the face, eh. Knocked me out cold and I woke up with a big liner - starts on my face to the bridge of my nose. And that old guy was standing there and he says, "that's grandfather telling me to smarten up". For the longest time I didn't understand what the hell he meant by that eh. But he knew eh, that I was in trouble and I'm actually very thankful for that experience to this day. That one cultural experience. And what ended up happening, my mom went to _____ and I had kind of forgotten and I lied to my mother and said that the House Arrest thing got changed (and it didn't) and now I'm not and I started going out again. She moved to _____ and me and buddy _____ this other native guy who had been through the CFS system, we began to hang out and we lived at this lady that was my mother's friend. She was very traditional Indian lady - she took us in and we stayed there for awhile until we each got to Manitoba too ... we came out here eh. It was right around the Pink Floyd concert.

M: Oh right.

A: Yeah and then I met my brothers again, my brothers _____ and _____. Yeah, they were hard core drug dealers like cocaine and I got into _____ with them and we hung out in _____ for awhile just on my own with my brothers doing you know selling things, living fast times you know, for a couple of months. Until my court date in _____ came up and then I figured well, you know, I'll go back to _____. and there won't be nothing, you know - nothing will happen and my brother bought me a plane ticket to _____, eh - gave

me some money and said "So, I'll see you in a couple of weeks and we'll go see Pink Floyd." and I said "Okay, right on". So I flew to _____ and when I got there and when I went to court and all my friends were there and I stayed with _____ the lady, that native woman, she was like a mom, eh and when I went into the courtroom I was just damaged - 'cause sitting there was my old best friend's _____ my old roommate's new girlfriend and my ex-girlfriend sitting here eh. And the judge found me guilty and gave me 4 months of closed custody at the youth detainment centre. And fuck it was really quiet in the courtroom except for that little shithead, _____ - she was sitting there smiling - oh, I couldn't believe it. I was bawling eh... the reason I tell you this is to give you an idea of how much my heart was broken by this girl because I was still obsessed with her, eh. And I went to jail and I went to jail and when I went to jail - talk about operant conditioning. (Laughter) I'm having fun throwing all these things at you.

M: Yeah - laughter...you really studied for your psychology.

A: Yeah,..... but seriously talk about operant conditioning you know. They say that, they say that it doesn't work, but it worked for me. Well, to a certain degree. While I was in there of course. And I went in there, a week in there.... you know, I was a big boy, well, not big when I went in there but within two weeks I had already gained like 15 lbs. because I went in there totally manic like extremely manic, eh. Because I was on like crazy drugs like here in _____ with my brothers and stuff. And I went back and then I was in jail and I shaved my hair first thing ... all my beautiful hair, shaved it all off and was bald and the drugs that ...I got assessed there by a psychol...or a shrink or something and he put me on some like hard core psychotic drugs...

M: Okay, so where were we.

a: I was talking about how I went to jail and because of the fact that I didn't sleep for I think was something like 60 hrs. - like 2 days that I sat awake in jail because I was ... I slept the first initial holding period before I got transferred to the jail but then when I got there I didn't sleep. I went into this total manic phase. So I went to see the local shrink I guess and he put me on some pretty hard core drugs that sedated me very drastically like I stopped dreaming. I slept so deep I didn't dream and all's I could do is eat. And I guess the side effects of the drug was water retention and then weight gain slowed my whole system down, eh and I went up to about 200 and like maybe 40 lbs. like really fast, eh. And Jail was hard. I didn't have any friends in jail and I didn't get one visit while I was in jail because my whole family lived in _____. My father never came to visit me because he was working in the camp like in the bush camp. And but I was a model prisoner, I guess you could say. I got into one fight while I was in _____ Detainment Facility and that was to establish my place in the pecking order as they like to call it. And it was really cool as I was being transferred to _____ G. this old guy that was _____ he was going to adults, told me the ins and outs, eh. The first guy that picks shit with you man even if you don't think you'll win, hit him as hard as you can and don't stop hitting until somebody pulls you off. And then people will respect you and nobody will bother you. And so when I got in there, I mean, I've always considered myself very

intelligent and good at observing and I observed who was the toughest guy in the unit I was in and who his bitch was and all that stuff eh. And sure enough within a week you know, the tough guy sent his bitch who was the 2nd toughest, a big guy, a big red-haired guy, I don't remember his name though. But he sent him to me and uh, yeah I mean I've never really been scared of anybody eh, I mean, I grew up scraping - that was nothing new to me. Me and and and that's all we did was scrap and try and pick up girls. But he tried fighting me and uh like I punched him right out, eh like probably in about like 10 seconds. And all the guards - I mean, the guards hurt me more than the guy hurt me. They tackled me and split my head open on the steps and my ear split open and there was blood everywhere. Meanwhile, there is three guards holding me down and the oldest damn guard you ever,,,the most brittle guard you ever seen was holding down that was his name...holding this guy back and this guy was making this big scene eh. "You're dead , you're dead" and he jumped on me. Well while the guards have me, and grabs my genitals with both hands and put his foot on the steps and yanks. And I uh, uh I uh screamed out... like "Holy fuck...the guy gets my nuts" and then above me there was this other guy that I knew from T who was in the same jail going "Shit man, that's got to hurt." He was blasted on Prozac completely. They put kids on weird drugs in jail. Just like that. Everyone who was in that jail was on some kind of anti-psychotic or anti-depressant drug. Um, all kidsit was really depressing eh, because I grew up around drugs and all these drugs, eh...because my mom is a psychiatric nurse and also she educated me very thoroughly on the different types of drugs used for psycho-therapy and all that so... And all these kids were on drugs and so that was my 1st fight. And after that I made my move you know, like I had figured it out okay. Now I had respect, now I'm going to get the most respect and the toughest guy in the ward was this toothless, ugly Yik guy with tattoos all over him. He looked like he should have been in adult jail and he had this plush chair that he always sat in eh. And one day I sat in it eh and the movie was on. It was movie night and he comes up and he's like "Hey, , get out of my chair" and I said "Fuck you this is my chair now".

M: mmm...MMMM.

A: It's kind of funny but it's important. And he said "Excuse me" and I said "You heard me, I sat here first,it's my chair now. You sit here first tomorrow and it's your chair, you know, and until then sorry pal, I'm watching the movies - Get your own chair". And he didn't know how to react, eh, 'cause he saw what I did to his little friend, T, you know, I suppose at one point or another him and fought and it apparently it was a pretty matched fight eh, so he kind of - I don't think he wanted to have a go with the Indian, you know. So he made a big stink "You're fuckin' dead, man, you're fuckin' dead." And I said "Whatever you want pal, any old time". And from that point on I was very comfortable in that ward, like in that unit,

M: So you guys didn't actually go at it.

A No, he was just scared. And everyone was like yeah, He's a Bitch, _____ told you. You know what I mean, and then all of a sudden everyone was my friend and I was comfortable eh. Not really my friend - I never really opened up to anybody - all's I did was read and sleep and eat - and like, you know, shit. And within a month for good behaviour and being a model inmate or whatever, I got transferred to _____ from _____ to a place called _____ Camp, a low security youth detainment facility - it was like summer camp, man. They sent me to this place and they had satellite T.V., man, like satellite TV, go riding horses. You work in the....it was like a work camp eh, you worked for low like for 3 bucks a day, like crazy work, eh. But then in the evenings you sit there and you watch satellite TV and the food was so good and I went there and right away I knew the process. I identified who the toughest guys were in the camp - one was this guy named _____ and the other was this guy who told everybody he knew kickboxing - he was a black belt eh and I mean, I grew up around professional fighters my whole life, you know and like my father had me in gloves by the time I was three, man, and I was little kid and he phhht...ooww.."don't cry" you know and this guy he already started picking on me, you know really severely. And it was gym day so I decided to make my mark and make sure that nobody bothered me while I was there. So Iwe were playing dodgeball...you know the game dodgeball where you have the line and you throw the ball and if you get hit you're out.

M: Yeah.

A Well not the toughest guy 'cause that guy was a monster - he was about 6, 5" and I swear he was 280 lbs. He burnt a like a 10 Million \$ school down in _____ and like he was ...he had been in juvie for like 3 years and he was turning 19 you know and he was going to be transferred to adults, do you know what I mean. He was a fuckin' evil kid man and I but the second toughest kid though like _____ never bothered anybody - he had been in juvie so long that he was just kind of a big, dopey...just lifted weights all day, eh. But the second toughest guy was this other guy with a black, ponytail and he walked around like he knew karate you know and I just got a kick out of him, eh. And so finally, a couple days into that place, everybody didn't know really know how to act towards me because I hadn't established my place in the pecking order yet.

M: Yeah.

A: So Dodgeball day came and that guy was making fun of me that day, you know, and so in the gym you know I looked at him and he was calling me tubby and porky and all that stuff and I was pretty fat from the drugs I was on, eh. And so he got knocked out of the dodgeball game and he was walking off the gym and I went "Hey" and he looked at me and I'm like from about me to you and I chucked that dodge ball right at his face, eh. Like he had a big red welt on his face, eh and he fell on his ass and he couldn't believe it eh because I saw him get knocked out. And he saw me see him get knocked out eh and he got up and he's all doing this karate stuff and like "You're fuckin' dead man, _____" and I'm like whatever, man and I got into my stance eh and right there I looked at him and I said "You don't fuckin' know shit pal and I know it". You know, and

he kind of went phhht and I said "You know I'll kick your ass". and then he looked at me and like "You're dead, you're dead". And then the guards came eh and when you do that in jail its called being heat ? you know. When you want to fight somebody you don't nothing, you got to be real cool about it and like...

meet me in the washroom because they break it up like that eh. The guards, there's guards everywhere. And he ended up making himself look stupid, eh, because of what I said to him. Before he had any chance to respond I looked at him and I said " I know, you don't fuckin' know karate - you're a punk and I'll kill ya', you know what I mean, and I'm not afraid". And so he was like "Oh shit, I better save face here because like I waited to long to really attack him, you know, and I looked like a bitch, you know, that's the whole way it works for them and so the guards pulled him out eh because he was making a stink. And everybody was like "Whoa, man, you're crazy, he's going to kill you, this and that," you know what I mean... and I'm like "the guy's not going to do nothing to me" and I'm telling all these kids eh, 'cause they are all smaller than me - I was telling them all "I'll just fuckin' choke him - I'll knock him out, watch, if he tries anything with me, I'll knock him out" and everybody is like "All right". (Laughing) "He's the toughest guy, well, except for but he's the second toughest. And the next day after lunch in the middle of camp there was all these paths eh and in the middle there was a rock. He said "Meet me at the Rock" and I met him at the rock eh and he came up to me right in my face because he was tall. And he said "You know, , you know you should be more careful", and I'm like "Excuse me" and he's like "Yeah, pretty cool man - sorry about that shit yesterday and calling you fat - you should just be more careful where you're throwing the balls eh. You know and I was like "Yeah, okay, right on" and I shook his hand and right there I became above him in the pecking order. Do you understand the whole system.

M: Yeah.

A: And all the kids were like - you know and then... it was cool and from that point on I had no problems. I got a job in the laundry room which made me the coolest. Because in jail you are provided with your clothes, sweat pants, sweat shirt, T-shirts. And everybody wants the baggy sweat pants, the baggy sweat shirts and the nice brand new T-shirts. You know, and you can always tell the geeks, because the geeks get the sweat pants too small for them, and you

M: mmm..mmm.

A: you know and the cool ones you can always tell because they got the baggy sweat pants, the baggy sweat pants, you know and it looked cool. And so I got a job in the laundry room and I became The Man. You know, because they were like "Hey man, can you get me some new sweats, please " and I'm like "Well, give me a box of chips from the canteen, and I'll give you a brand new outfit bro." Okay, man, you got it, you got it. Oh, I'll take a couple of Wonderbars you know, and I'll take a six-pack you know like that kind of stuff for new underwear. And so I became The Man and then I got a job in the kitchen, man, and the kitchen guy let us smoke...like gave us cigarettes and

let us go out in the back. You're not allowed to smoke in juvenile centres, eh. And you know, and we'd eat the cookies and oh, pig out eh. And after a while, oh then I really became The Man because this kid came in eating Ridalin and I said "Hey Man I'll give you a chocolate bar for those" and he said, You got chocolate bars here. And I gave him a chocolate bar and I guess he didn't realize what they meant by you have canteen option every two weeks and you can buy your chocolate bars but he didn't know and he gives me this Ridalin, man. Fuck, man, I was trading those and I got this whole trading thing going, eh. Like drugs, tobacco ('cause you can get kids to bring tobacco in and they stick it up their ass and then bring it in) and trade tobacco but the best thing I had to trade and this is sick but I want to tell you about it.

M: Sure.

A: I got a hold of a Victoria Secrets Catalogue (laughter)

M: and they were surprised.

A: Oh my God. I got a six-pack of pop, a chocolate bar and 2 boxes of chips and I'll let you pick a picture out of here to take with you to your room. Your new girlfriend for the next 6 months. (Laughter) You know, I was bbbad. People were like - can I borrow your catalogue.... and I'm like "No, man". Laughter God, You know, for masturbation purposes eh. Isn't that crazy?.

M: Too funny.

A: Yeah well, that's the penal system for you - it's even harsh for juvies man. I can't imagine adults you know. God, at least there's no significant like, like, like, pattern of like cultural violence craziness in juvie. But a month there and I got transferred for good behaviour again.

M: Oh good.

A: 'cause I got looked up as a model prisoner.

M: You had great system going.

A: Oh yeah. Well I was running that joint, man. I was telling them what to play on the TV, what channel because they had satellite eh. and stuff like that. After I...but I got transferred to even lax, better place. I got transferred to the Life Skills Program on in . It was an advanced life skills program where they teach you how to reinteract in free integrated society and give you a job and academic skills.

M: Right.

A: And I went there and that was the worst part of my jail time. They had a swimming pool there. They took us into town every day - we could wear our clothes, walk around town without any supervision. They let us smoke, good food but the other kids would come that were really institutionalized. See me I never let it get to me, eh - like the jail thing. I never, ever picked on the little , you know. As a matter of fact the reason I got along with people so well...like the reason I say I never had any friends in jail because I could never talk to anyone intellectually...never talk to anyone about life. They were all too institutionalized eh. They let the system get to them and I think the reason I did so well was because I was always, like ...Ahhh, Phhhht, this is stupid you know.

M: Yeah, you were able to put it into perspective.

A: Exactly, you know, and to understand like even the guards were sick. That their sick little psychological games they paid with these poor inmates, poor youths. Like You know, they try and pick on them and stuff. Like, I never let them get to me eh.

M: So how do you think you were able to **not** let it get to you.

A: Because I knew how to use it to my advantage. So I could manipulate it and I mean from a very young... that was what my mother said when I was a young, she got me into therapy when I was a young child. She said the psychologist said that your son manipulates people. He's that way. Watch out - Don't let him manipulate you. You know. Ahh, so I didn't let it get to me and I just kept going and used everything to my advantage. And I turned 17 in jail. I had my birthday at the Program. And for my birthday I got drunk in the weight room and 4 guys came in and they bought my room mate in - my bunk mate. And me and my bunk mate really got along until that night, and these 3 white guys made my bunk mate who was made to fight me. And he was a small guy eh and there was no way he was going to beat me. And they were like "you fight him or you're going to get the pipes". And they all have pipes eh, like you know those weight bars. And I said "Come on guys, this is fuckin' stupid. Look where we are. You know, and I tried to explain to them - I said "we're almost out, guys" you know. This isn't going to happen on the street - you know, we're all going to be smoking joints, drinking and getting laid, man, within a matter of months. You don't get sent to the until you are at the end of your term to help you re-integrate. And I said "This is stupid - why are we doing this". But they were all so institutionalized eh. "Fuck you, you fight him or you're dead", you know.

M: they were into it...

A: yeah, and so I said okay and I looked at my friend eh and I said "Do you want to fight me" and he said "Yeah, Fuck.." and he was into it too. 'cause he had to be or they would beat him up. So I fought him and I kicked the shit, kicked the shit out of him, man. You know - I was whispering in his ears and said "you know you're losing, man just fall on the ground like I knocked you out" and you know "Fuck you", you know, and

he would freak out again and try and hurt me and he couldn't, eh. And after I beat him I mean, fuck, those guys jumped me anyway. They didn't hurt me though, man - I pulled some Ninja shit and dived and grabbed my own bar and hit one of them over the back. Got hit in the back, clubbed one in the shoulder and jumped out the door in the weightroom and were after _____?.. But the scary thing was I had to stay awake all night because of my room mate, My room mate came in the room and I looked him like "Hey man, no hard feelings. I understand why you did it...his name was _____. I said I understand why you did it - they would have probably done the same thing to you if you hadn't done it and I respect that, and I said "Come on man, let's put it behind us" and I wanted to shake his hand. But he pushed me eh, and said "Fuck you". And so I stayed awake until five in the morning waiting for him to jump me in the middle of the night eh. I tried talking to him while we were in bed and I said "You know if you jump me and we get caught for fighting - we're both sent automatically back to jail without any questions, regardless of who started the fight. You know that don't you." and he said "Fuck you, A, go to bed" you know. So I....finally I couldn't stay awake anymore and I fell asleep 'cause my meds they made me really tired like you know. And fuck, I woke up in the morning and there was a sock beside me with a chunk of wood in it. Kind of a little message, eh, I could of killed you. But I think what I said to him made sense eh.

M: Yeah...

A: So he didn't hurt me but for all I know he could have been standing over me like phfffft... fuck, you know. But he could have fuckin' piped me right out there man.

And I got out the _____ at the top of the class. The final challenge that they posed to us was....you know how they have those big _____, they're like 100's of feet high....well, they have a rope tied ?? to the trees and you go up there with harnesses that you attach on and you swing through the trees and pull like cliff hangar stuff. And we all did it eh. I was the first one to go and I aced the course eh. Aced it. And everyone else did it too. And then they go "Okay, that's the easy part eh...Now who's going to do it blindfolded". And the only one who did it blindfolded was me, you know, and I went up there and I fuckin' aced it man. And everybody else who tried ...chhhhhh.... (laughter) you know, and the course ends with chhhh... and you'd slide down this like a 100 ft. down this wire and its really cool, eh.

M: Sounds like fun.

A: Yeah, it was a lot of fun eh. And I said my good-byes to all those guys but they all told me to fuck off. Fuck, my birthday card, I still have that birthday card. They wrote the most horrible things on my birthday card eh. And the staff provided no protection to me ...you know that's one thing about the penal... the youth justice system that I hope to some day change. 'cause this fuckin' staff provide no protection for these kids; as a matter of fact they cater to the assholes and they provide no attention to the kids that are getting beat. None at all, like no protection and no compassion either.

M: But why do you think you were able to turn things around for yourself?

A: After all that. Well, get to that right now.

M: Okay.

A: Well, there's a big huge chunk though of it that I should mention to you. But after I got out of jail I moved back home.

M: Home -

A: ?

M: and you came back here.

A: Yeah, I left .

M: and you missed the Pink Floyd concert.

A: Oh yeah, the Pink Floyd Concern was long gone. I came back home and I moved in with my mother on . By then my baby brother had been born. Before my mother left me - see her and my father gave it one go - like it was one night you know. He knocked her up you know but she was still going leaving though. My baby boy, was born, eh. Ohh, my little boy, I call him my boy because I take care of him eh. That's my little boy right there.

M: Ohhhh, sweet. How old is he?

A: He's now. He just started hockey.

M: Is he in ?

A: Yeah.

M: He's a sweetie.

A: He's a tough kid, really cool kid. Sweet though, eh. Not tough like me, tough in a different way.

Um, we ahh... I live with my mom here in and same shit. I got into drugs and you know, I ended up... I tried going back to high school but I got kicked out at Christmas. And I was heavily addicted to Valium at the time so I didn't care and I was like "Ah, fuck off", you know and I ended up moving out of my own at around the age of 17 and I got into Raves.

M: Huh.

A: laughing...Uhh I moved with my brother, , who at the time now was working for the ,

M: Uh, huh.

A: And my brother I told him I need a place to stay and I need to get hooked up, I'm not living at home anymore and high school didn't work so I'm going to try something else. Hook me up please. And my brother said "Okay, bro," and he introduced me to his friend, a gentleman by the name of . Have you heard of him? And he was the president of . and was his best friend, my brother . And me and hit it off eh like, I became his second son next to his other sons, and can't remember the other guys name...the younger one. And I moved in with him, with on at the time and I ran the downstairs which was a drug house eh. Like people would come - I had an established clientele. They paid \$100 a day just to sit there. I got all the free drugs I wanted - had phenomenal prices on things like cocaine, you know, and I made money. Fuck, I made tons of money. And I got into the Raves scene and I began to run parties, like Raves. Like I didn't really care for the Indian thing, it was cool to work for them although I never became a member of the - I just worked for them... for privately. And I never really hung around the Indians at that point yet. But I got into this Rave thing, got into a bunch of crazy drugs, became a crazy junkie, and went through a ton of women. And then finally after about...that whole era was a blurb...like a total blurb. I was addicted to ecstasy, have you heard of that and I was always doing that and I guess at one point finally I cracked. I had my first nervous breakdown and I moved back home to my mother's house. And for 4 months I lived in her livingroom in my mom's nightgown,,I wore my mother's nightgown. Like I really, really broke down eh.

M: Yeah.

A: I would wrap myself in my mom's nightgown,eh, and sat there for 4 months and I had gone from getting off the bus at 17, you know, 240 lbs. bald to 135 lb. at the age of 18 on my mother's couch. My Mother had a friend named - he's executive director of a program called - a program for aboriginal youth in . And he came over one day and he said "Well, what are you doing now, ". I had stopped wearing my mom's nightgown and by then I was dating my now fiancée, , like just dating - like I was seeing her eh. And I said "Nothing, I'm not doing nothing" so he followed with "Do you want to do something". And I said, "Well, yeah" and he said, "Well, why don't you go down to this place at the and try and apply. They are accepting applications for a training program there for native youth. And I said "Okay, I'll go try it out". So I went down there for an interview at ? and ...oh I just looked harsh eh. I walked in there with my short black hair - died black - and my face all dark and unhealthy and eyeshadow on and eyeliner and black nailpolish, dressed in black and silver rings and just you know, really evil eh. Real attitude you know, I was Mr. Mod Guy you know - Raver guy.

Stupid... sure enough I mean I aced the interview. I told them everything I wanted to hear and there like "oh yeah, we totally accept, yah, that's great" So I started in ? as one of their clients and I went through that program and for the first time in my life I started to really learn about history and Indian people. I was still doing drugs like a mad hound though eh. But I started to see Indians that weren't drunk. That weren't like my granny, like my father, like my brothers, I started to see Indians that were sober. And I ended up graduating from _____ ? there at the top of the class again. They gave me a special certificate that said I was there valedictorian or whatever and keynote speech at the graduation banquet. So yeah, _____ means "_____".

M: what is that?

A: Ojibway

M: Alright.

A: Ah, so I graduated from that and I did awesome. And what they do when you graduate is they put you in a job placement and the job placement I got was an advertising salesman at _____, _____ and this was my first real job.

M: Okay, I know the newspaper.

A: Yeah, and I worked there for a year plus I was doing drugs, you know, and that kind of thing. Then I go a very, very important education at _____ on politicos because at the time, the journalist, _____, was working there and was also a playwright. And _____ is a very intelligent man. He is one of the most respected aboriginal journalists in Canada and is now one of the most respected playwrights in Canada, aboriginal playwrights - right up there with _____. And he taught me a lot about politics and about the way the system works against native people and the way that our own politic systems work and really began to stir up some questions in my mind about what being an Indian was all about, even more than _____ did. And my term at _____ came to an end very suddenly because my relations with the management deteriorated. I didn't like them and at this point (by this point) I had moved out from my mothers and I had moved in with my partner, _____. I think it's important to include here this tale too, eh, like I met ('cause she is) one of the most significant changes in my life - what made me want to change for the better from all the crap -o what I am today.

M: Why did you think that ??????

A: Well, I was living on _____ and _____. Do you recall the little _____ that used to be where _____ is? - it's the coolest little cafe and I used to - it used to be around the corner from my house or my apartment and one day I went around there to meet my friends, and _____. They were my crew, eh - we were all the guys in black. We made dressing in black cool in the race back then. And we were sitting there drinking coffee, eh and this beautiful girl, this beautiful brunette, she walked into the coffee shop and I saw her and I

was blown away by her. I couldn't believe the beauty of her and I looked at my boys and I said "you see that girl there", and they're like "Holy shit, yah" and I go "you watch it may take me two, three years - I want to marry that girl". And they were all like "Yeah, right, whatever, she looks like a goody, goody; she looks like a little highschool kid". You know, like we were so much older than high school kids.

M: Yeah. (laughter)

A: But we, I began to see her alot there.

M: At the coffee shop.

A: Yeh.

M: So you didn't approach her right that day

A: Hell no.

M: Okay.

A: I approached it strategically. Instead of approaching her I approached her friend which the lesser attractive and more outgoing. So I approached her friends, befriended her, flirted with her to get to have a crush on me 'cause I knew she would tell "her" about how wonderful I was. And that way she would already have a really good impression of me.

M: Right.

A: It's kind of sad because that other girl really liked me, eh, her name was . But I met finally - introduced to her and asked her "Can I buy you a tea?" and I took her for a tea, eh. And after that I began to talk to her more and I totally eliminated and I didn't talk to anymore. Then I started to talk to all the time and then started telling "Oh he's a bad ass - stay away from him. He does drugs, he sells drugs. He goes to Raves". Ya know, the whole bad ass thing again and didn't care though. And you know I'd see her at the coffee shop after school and I'd be like "Do you have a cigarette?" and she didn't have a cigarette so I'd give her my pack. And I'd ask her "Do you have lunch money for school tomorrow?" and if she didn't have lunch money I'd give her lunch money. You know, and "I'll see you later, okay". You know, and that kind of - you know really buttered her up. And then our coffee shop closed.

M: Right.

A: And I didn't see her for a month and it was driving me crazy.

M: So how many years did you go with her?

A: Five - four years ago.

M: Yeah, because it's been closed for awhile.

A Yeah.

M: Okay, all right.

A: And I think it was '94 or '95ish. Yeah, '95 and then I didn't see her, eh and I was dying and winter just ended and it was springtime. It was May and one day I was talking on the phone at my house - I was still working through the at that point, eh, just to rewind a little, to talk about how me and got together. And she called me. She had talked to every one of her friends and tracked my number down and she called me and she said "Hi" and I was like "Hi, who's this?" and she's like "It's " and I was like Ohh, and I almost died, eh, "Hi, can I see you **now**". and she said "Yeah". And we went for coffee and I bought her cheesecake and it was really uncomfortable (- No I didn't buy her cheesecake) yeah, we had coffee and it was super uncomfortable and I didn't know...

M: Why?

A: 'Cause we didn't know what to say to each other and we were nervous and we both knew we really liked each other. And so being the little drug addict I was at the time I said "Do you want to go smoke some pot?". So we went and got fried and came back and then we were so much more like "Hey", and we ate cheesecake and we walked all over. We ended like getting sexually involved that day - like right off the bat and we started dating. And she dated me right through everything, eh, like all that - hitting rock bottom with the drug abuse....

M: in your mom's nightgown.

A: in my mom's nightgown. She came to see me that whole time. She came to see that whole time and kept me company, you know, and really developed a relationship with me. She actually was my, sort of, lover through three relationships with other women. Like on the side, you know and. I'm not proud of that, eh, like I wish it was different.

M: Yeah.

A But she was...like she stayed with me, eh, regardless of whatever woman I was with. And we really grew together, eh and then finally, like her parents are

M: Uh, huh.

A: Okay, first generation Canadian.

M: Okay. Does that mean you guys are going to have lots of kids?????????

A: uhhh! we'll get by????? and she...her parents are very strict, eh, to the point she was eighteen she had a 10 o'clock curfew on the weekends, okay. So it got the point where like finally she said "I'm moving out - do you want me to move out with you " and I said " Fuckin' A, let's get a place". That's when I went to and I did all that and we got a place together and when I worked through Wh.. we lived together. We were addicted to drugs together and alcoholics together. And we went through a lot of hard times together, eh. And after when I quit I went through another training program called Ring a bell,

M: (Shakes her head).

A No - it's non-existent now. It was a training program on community development through the traditional holistic approach of mind/body experience - an empowerment of all those three and the empowerment of educationally through spiritual-economical-political-social understandings to why we're here today and what's going on - with a totally aboriginal slant to it, eh. And again, I graduated like top of the class, eh, like I succeeded....and at the end...it was an ?

M: I work for them, okay.

A: Yeah, I've done a lot of work for them, eh, lots... and at the end of the program there was a grant, a bursary, or \$3,000.00. The only way to get it was to do a community development initiative on your own and be successful. More than successful but to go and implement a community development initiative.

M: And that's all the were after. Go do something? Give it a whirl.

A: Yeah.

M: Okay.

A Now, through , their whole curriculum was based on history - Pre-colonial all the way to now, politics, everything, okay.

M: Yep.

A: And an understanding of community development - building a community from within. Empowering local people to take care, take the initiative, take the, take responsibility and build up their community themselves. The whole ideology behind Canadian development we learnt... through this program???

M: How come it's not in existence anymore?

A: Because the guy running it was embezzling money from . So, so what happened was during that year I went to a Youth Conference - A huge Youth Conference in '97 at the . There was 2,000 aboriginal youth in attendance in all 5 leadership - from the Indigenous Women's Collective, from the AMC and so on, so forth..... and a representative from the Friendship Centre. All the organizations that represent Native People were there to hear the youth wanted. And I had made a really severe political statement there, eh...and kind of made my mark and like everybody kind of turned eyes and said "Holy Shit, whose this guy," because in the _____ agreement initiative workshop that was being done by and _____ at the time. What he was trying to tell the..... review that the _____ agreement initiative was self-government, true self-government and I had done my research on it through the program I was in and the _____ agreement initiative was nothing but a transfer of administration from, you know, the Indian Affairs to our own government. It doesn't entitle us to determine anything. We don't have any access to natural resources. We don't have any access to, you know, we run our own education systems, like all this crap, eh, is just bullshit, eh.

M: Yeah.

A: And I called him on it. And he got really frustrated, eh. And he said, "What are worried about? Go to school, get a good education, don't worry about it. Take care of yourself, get a nice family and a nice house and a good paying job, we'll take care of it", in front of all these kids, eh. And I freaked, you know. And I told him "Who the fuck do you think you are to tell me not to worry about my fuckin' starving people? Who the fuck do you think you are to tell me not to worry about my family back in]- where one of them is dying every goddamn month." "Who the fuck are you?" you know, and I told them - I said "You better learn where you come from and take the fuckin' white hand out of your ass and stop being a god damn puppet and realize that what you are doing is bullshit 'cause it is, okay"? and the whole session got shut down because of that outburst eh. Like it got violent and security escorted out because it got really intense, eh and that's what started the whole community consultation process on the _____ agreement initiative ... and what was part of what stopped the _____ agreement initiative from moving forward - it's still going but it's..... they're slowly getting rid of it, eh. You know, and so the forum of that conference

M: and even before you became a political activist

A: Yes, that the first of the political activist. Now at the end of part of the cultural curriculum of the program was to take the youth to attend the sundance. We went to the sundance at S. Do you what sundance is?

M: Yep.

A: And I went to my first sundance.

M: What did you do?

A: A week prior to me going to my first sundance, my girlfriend had a discussion and she had told me that she couldn't take my drugs anymore. She couldn't take it anymore. That she was going to leave me if I didn't smarten up. But I went to Sundance - that was the most powerful experience of my life. Everything changed at that sundance. I see what these people were doing and I understood the concept of it and everything changed, eh. And that sundance when I went to the tree to get I received my second traditional name at that sundance, eh. It was Annishabay name, "_____"; that's "_____". And my clan is the _____ clan, eh, like I got that done at a naming ceremony at that sundance. And my first name I got as a baby is _____, leader of the _____, and my second was still a name and that's my sundance name. And when I received that name and I received a lot of very special experiences that I don't want to really go into but just know that they were powerful. Yeah, and I seen people there, you know, going through the motions of that ceremony so selflessly (like non-selfish). And it changed me, eh. At the end of Sundance the guy I go see still to this day for my lessons, I guess you could call them, about our culture and traditions walked up to me at the end of the sundance and poked me in my chest, eh, and he goes "Now you know better". I didn't know what he meant by that until a week later when I was in a bar about to take a sip from a beer eh, and I heard that "Now you know better" and I drank anyway. The drunker I got the worse I felt and when I smoked pot I just got paranoid as hell and I didn't feel good. All I could think about was sundance and the realities of our people and then all the history that I learnt at _____ began to really compound in my head making sense about colonization, about genocide, about you know, everything. And it all began to become clear, eh. And that summer I attended another sundance in _____. My uncle run that sundance..... my family still practicing ceremonies..., _____. And that changed me - that was it - I quit drinking, I quit doing drugs right there, that was it, I stopped. ["Now you knew better". I guess at that point, there was another question - not sure whether this was in your discussion as there were other people talking too - a lot of noise and laughter]

I pierced....at my uncle's Sundance in _____, I dragged the buffalo skulls and I'll share this with you when I did that - and I swear to God that my great-grandmother that I told you about was walking beside me holding my hand when I drank those skulls.....

Ahh, give me a minute here. Yah, it was weird eh. Like ah, so it was kind of like you have a responsibility - 'cause no one else in our family is doing it. And that's the message I got there eh. Before I drank those buffalo skulls you know you have cloth you offer to the tree, right, before I went to pierce standing at the stake and fire with my tobacco to offer it, this voice came to my head and it said you can put your cloth and that tobacco in this fire right now and walk down that road and never come back and it can either be your life the way you live it or you can go into that lodge and commit yourself to a certain way of living, That's your choice. And it was clear as day that

choice, that fact. And I offered my tobacco and I walked into the lodge and I got pierced, eh, and I drank those buffalo skulls and when I burnt that tobacco that was, you know, that was, that was it.

And when I returned back to _____ I began my community development project which was to create an urban aboriginal youth council that would meet the needs of young aboriginal people in this city that government and political leaders were failing to meet and it would also be an organization or an entity which political organizations could find a common ground to meet on. All the bickering between the Metis, the First Nations, the women, the Friendship Centre, they could all meet on a common ground which would be the youth and their future. So in my mind came up the concept of _____ and with the help of friends we created the first _____ - organization in Canada to do community development work. We got funded through _____ with the support of the Aboriginal Council at the time as a parenting organization to provide us with skills for management, and accounting and all these different things required to run a non-profit organization. And it was a success - and I was sober and I was in love with my girlfriend. And I had a very special talk with my girlfriend after that Sundance in _____. You see, for that first year we lived together I cheated on her alot. I wasn't really committed - I was doing drugs, you know. After _____, I realized that I had to be perfectly honest with her if we were to move ahead in our relationship, I was to be honest and leave everything behind. And so on our moving day, when we were moving out of our old place, I told her to go to sleep and that I would do all the packing for her because she was tired working nights. And I packed everything that I owned into boxes and she owned into separate boxes. And I had told her, eh, after she got out of the shower and it was the big day, eh. I said "you know, honey, I got to be honest with you, if we're going to move in our relationship". She said. "What's that?" She had just started college, eh, to be a _____ and I told her. I said "You know, I've cheated on you alot and I've been with other women and I hate to tell you that 'cause I need to ... for to move ahead in this relationship I got to get rid of this guilt and if I'm going to be true to myself and true to you, I got to tell you." and I told her "If you choose to leave me, that's fine, I'm not going to argue with you about it and I will give you money every month, you know, while you're in college and I'll pay your rent and you know, make sure that you're okay - if you need groceries just ask, I'll give you money for it.", you know 'cause I was the reason she moved out, eh, and it's hard living on your own as a college student. And I said, "But if you stay with me, I swear to you, I swear on everything I have, that I will be the husband of your dreams, eh - I will be the man for you and that I will be a good father to my children we have". And she stayed with me, eh. And I lit a smudge and at the time the sacred items that I carried, they weremy smudge bowl is a frying pan - a little Safeway bag full of sage.

M: Yeah.

A: That's all I had, eh.

M: That's all you need.

A: Yeah, but you know what I mean, though.

M: Yeah.

A: I was so humble I said in front of these sacred items here I swear to you , on what I just said, in front of grandfather's and grandmother's I burnt tobacco, eh, and she... the same thing, eh, and I fell off the wagon once. Things happened fast when took off. I became like a really highly profiled person in the city and I started to go to lots because somebody in wanted to use me in consultations and stuff. And I won an from

M: Congratulations.

A Yeah that was really powerful for me that one. Being a graduate and then winning the award. When I look back, it was unreachable when I first seen it, eh, and there I was on stage receiving that award for my work and everything snowballed from there, eh. I started to go to a lot and it was in some consultations with funding stream - it's a big funding stream.

M: Yes, I've heard of that.

A: Yeah, well I...the Metis were bombarding me, like the Metis runs, they were just bombarding me with all this bullshit and like the presentation that I gave at those national government consultations is what set up the way that that money is distributed today. Because I went there and I had stated flat out and I brought all these display cases and everything, eh, and I set up this whole spin, eh, and I did a presentation to the Inuit, the Metis, First Nations and Government and I said there is no way... like they were going to give all the , eh.....and I said there's no way on earth that an association of can handle administration of this project and in no way do they meet the needs of - NO WAY do they have the facilities needed to administer these dollars - NO WAY. And I stated this, this and this and I gave them the whole demographics of Winnipeg and Edmonton and Vancouver and like, where the Metis Centres are - the Indian and Metis Friendship Centres are - and now, the way it's just being distributed is through youth committees. Young people selected through different organizations and the youth are making decisions on how the money is going to be spent. And that was through the presentation I gave at the

But I broke down and I went and got drunk, eh, because I was just sick of all the people being mean to me because they hated me because of it, eh. And I went and got drunk - I didn't do anything bad and I just drank alot. Holy fuck, did that destroy me, man. Because at my first sundance, I got healing for that, eh. This guy told me he'd be.. he was sort of vague...you're addictions would be taken away. That ceremony I had to do eh. I said "Okay, and he said, "But if you drink again after that it'll screw you up more than you've ever,ever been screwed up in your life". And when I drank that time in Ottawa, that one time, , I remember the day I fell off the wagon once, that was 2 years

ago this , I stopped dreaming for 6 months. I was having beautiful dreams after Sundance, eh, like now I dream like crazy, eh. And I cried for 3 days, after I sobered up and stopped crying and I went into a depression, eh. Lack of creativity and I realized what damage alcohol truly is. And that ended every urge I have to drink or do drugs. Since then I haven't touch them, eh. And also to the embarrassment I had to go through smelling like alcohol, being at a meeting with other native youth even though they all smelled like alcohol too. It was fucking embarrassing for me. And never again do I want to feel that way and never again do I want to be one of those native people sitting at a table, making decisions on behalf of thousands of native people, you know, half cut. It's absurd and it's disrespectful. And so basically, I haven't touched alcohol and drugs since then. Since that one incident. It bugged my old lady as soon as I got off the plane. She gave me a kiss and "Did you drink"? and I start crying "On yes, I got drunk".... "I'm sorry".

(Laughter)

But took off, eh. I worked there for two years. And the two years I worked for I won an , I was the Executive Director, I've done workshops, I was selected to represent last summer, I did a workshop there with ??????. the secretary to state for children and youth on the situation of indigenous youth in Canada and around the world. I meant ??????., the secretary-general of the . I've had lunch or dinner with every minister of the government from Pettigrew to Axworthy. I've done a lot of work. Myself and an associate of mine, we set up a . Of course, we didn't get any thanks or credit for it at the end - they took the project from us. That's the way it works, though eh. They took the credit for all the work but we designed the whole structure and how it would fit within the structure. Took a look at their whole structure of the organization and designed how it relates to everything you know, how the body exists across Canada and the regions at the assembly of First Nations services. I chaired the . I got elected in New Zealand.

....

Last year, I organized the International.....the official Canadian delegation - Inuit, Metis, about 6 different First Nations, like big nations, non-status like to attend the world . I took them down there - , and at the conference they all had fund but I was working 16 hours a day for those on the executive committee and the whole organizing thing. And I'm actually going back to in February. The concepts that we've developed in the like by myself and my associates on leadership development and community development I have given on...I've traveled to all 5 continents, Africa, everywhere. We've been at the United Nations twice now; me and my associates. In my eye, was the best thing that I ever did, eh. It was my community development project to get my . And after I got my I just kept working and managed to create a lot of beautiful things for the - a lot of cool programs. I got of lot of - I've had a lot of experiences, eh, I've had university people ask me to give lectures in their class - all sort of things.

Last year I _____ and it was amazing. So I went to them one year wished I could have one, the next year I won. So last year I _____ them and this year I gave the keynote address.

M: Wow.

A: At the....actually if you pick up a copy of _____ you see me on the front cover of the latest copy and The _____ too - I'm profiled in The _____ then. And now my organization - I resigned in October. _____ was the end of my contract and the renewal of the new _____ contributions because I had started to return to University. Well, not return - but to return to school and go to University as a mature student because what I find now is that I've reached a level now with my thoughts...thought pattern where I'm being offered opportunities that I can't handle.

M: What does that mean?

A: Don't have the skills.

M: Yeah,

A: Don't have the frame of mind to think, on handling such gained responsibilities. It was a miracle I pulled off the ???, like that was....

M: It's just like, then things just took off.

A: Yeah, like _____, I mean, like we started off with three employees and a shitload of volunteers. Now we employ 11 people full time with 3 part-time employees. We have our own building now. You know, that's fully equipped with computers and they have a piano for our music arts program. We've done a lot eh, _____ has been around now for two years. This concept has been like... this little community development project to create a youth council to service young native people to kind of sort out the mess that the political system - to get some understanding that the young people where they can seek out help and get service and it turned into like one of the most respected youth organizations in Canada. And I mean I've done a lot of stuff like before _____ me and the old, the first co-ordinator, _____, me and _____ really put the thing together eh. We...have you ever met _____ ...

M: No.

A: Oh, well the _____ actually took us to Mexico too and we were in Mexico the other year and we lived with the Zapatistes in the mountains. Andhave you ever heard of the Zapatistes, the rebel army that's fighting the Mexican government right now? Yeah, we lived with them in the mountains for like, you know, two weeks. We participated in one of their big protests.

And life's been amazing since I quit drinking and doing drugs. My first Sundance was two years ago where I actually began my transformation ?? where I sundanced in the lodge and I fasted and since then you know my life has been blessed them. I'm never broke like I always got money and always have food in my fridge, clothing, and a beautiful home, eh. And I find that the harder I work the more that comes to me, you know what I mean.

M: Yeah.

A: And now, now that I'm in university and kind of behind me and all the beautiful achievement and all the schools I've done workshops in. Like there's literally thousands of young people I've had in my workshops, because I do workshops on leadership developments eh, on empowerment and developing the mind, the body and the spirit as one unit. I could do workshops on, like, on history and decolonization workshops and I do a lot of stuff. But I'm a consultant now basically..... Like to make a long story short...like you know I do all kinds of different things now, you know. With all the experiences I've had though in the last few years working in.....I've worked with every level of government, to the city, to the province, to the federal government, to the United Nations. Now, I'm just....I've really given away the last 3 years of my life to a lot of people and in a sense you could say I'm kind of like - I'm a, I'm a, best example of government programs you'll ever see..

M: MMMM....HMMMM

A: 'cause jail worked in a sense. All these HRDC programs I took worked you know, and I'm still going, eh. And like all the people I've met and all the workshops I've done it all wouldn't have been possible without the support of my girlfriend - my fiancée or my mother and her really wise ways, eh. Like she's really.....she's doing her Masters right now on . And just everything eh. And where I'm going now is I'm just doing school and then I'm getting ready to go back to in February. There's the working groups meeting there and I have to _____ that. And this summer I'll be in for the next and I'll also be in this summer in Africa for the next . So I'm keeping busy but my main goal now is school. Everything is secondary to my school and my family of course. But school is I am trying to go ahead and get my, you know, Masters Degree in Eventually I'll have a PHD. Eventually I'll end up teaching but for now though, I'm going to do this school thing - by the time I'm 30 I'll have that Masters,

M: Yeah,

A: and then I'm going to start the real crazy stuff, you know, yeah, I'm going to..... my new addiction is creating things, eh, like the, the Assembly of 1st Nations I was one of the key persons in creating that that was non-existent, you know, with the - I helped create that, you know, and now we are going to be creating a Youth _____ and we're going to do a little more but now like, I

want to go to school and have babies. I'm getting married in [redacted] and that will be beautiful. And I guess recapping on everything like the past eh. Like I've had three fathers; the father that wasn't there and that screwed everything that moved - he has a nickname "[redacted]" - my dad, my biological father - [redacted], and I had [redacted], the - that's his fighter name, eh, who taught me a lot of things, and I had [redacted]. And you know, [redacted] was a very, very agitating type of person, eh. They all taught me what not to do.

M: Yeah.

A [redacted] and I love them for it, eh. Like with [redacted] and all the abuse and all the sexually abuse I suffered because of him. You know when I was still drinking, just before I quit, I called him, after seven years or ten years of not talking to him, called him up at 2:00 in the morning one night. I wasn't totally pissed but I was pretty drunk and I told him, eh, I said, "Hey, [redacted]. this is your old son - do you remember me, and he's like "Holy fuck, A, like hi". Hello, holy fuck, how're you doing? and I just told him flat out eh, I said "Listen, [redacted], I want to be your friend, I don't want to be your son, I don't expect anything from you. I haven't asked you for many things, friend, ever since I was a child and I'll only ask you for one thing". And he says "What's that?" and I said, "I want you to bite your pride to let me tell you everything that's been on my mind for a decade." and he said, "Okay, go ahead" and I said "And you cannot interrupt. You have to promise me just to give in to me that you'll listen and hear everything that I have to tell you 'cause it's really bad, eh and there's a lot of good stuff too [redacted]". And he said "Okay" and I told him, eh. You know, I told him all the reasons I fuckin' hate him. I said "I hate you. Because of you I got molested because you weren't there to stop it and you should have been as my father. You took the responsibility to raise me as your own son - you should have been there instead of out fucking my auntie. You know, you should have been there when I got raped by that guy at that fuckin' group home - to stop it. You should have been watching me instead of out fucking some other girl in the barn. You shouldn't have beat my mother and then if you were anything of a man you shouldn't have done it - at least if not in front of your child and you shouldn't have beat me. Because you don't beat children - you don't do that. And I went on and on and on and on [redacted], fuck it went on for 2 hours....2 hours worth of I hate you because of this.

M: MMMM....Hmmm

A: And he listened, eh, and he listened in a good way. And then I told him, eh, and I said "You know, with all that aside I thank you for teaching me how not to be [redacted], for teaching me how to respect women by showing me what not to do to them. You know I appreciate that and I appreciate it too because you did make me tough, you know. I suppose in some sick way that, without the lessons you brought into my life, you know, I would have been a little weaker and there would have been some points where you know, the toughness you put in me helped me get through, right.

M: Yeah, right.

A: You know, without going insane. And the same thing about my father, , you know. Same thing about my father, , he taught me that we are all products of our environment. The environment we grow up in dictates how we'll be in our adult life. He grew up in an environment, where his father is screwing around on his mother left and right, this and that, and his mother was extremely overbearing, you know, and I know that now but I didn't know that when we were fist-fighting. 'cause now I know why he cheated on my mother all the time and why he was so goddamn overbearing on me and had his nose in everything in my life. It was products of his own environment.

And my mother provided my whole moral code which was very strict. I find \$10.00 in a wallet and if there's a number in it, I'll call the number and I'll return the wallet with the \$10. If a girl gives me an extra nickel in my change, you know, here you go. Well that's sexist, if a girl OR A GUY gives me an extra nickel with my change, I'd tell them you gave me an extra nickel.

From my father who wasn't there, I learnt that you must pay all the attention to children. But to this day I still search a father figure, eh, to this day and I vowed that the children I have, I would be there in their lives every day - that I can.

M: _____

A: Yeah, you know that.

And my girlfriend taught me never to give up on people, you know. All the bullshit I put her through and she's still with me, man. Taught me never to give up on people and never lose faith in people. Everybody on the earth lost faith in me, thought I was going to die of a drug overdose, except for her, you know.

Sundance has taught me that nothing in life comes for free and that everything that you get in your life whether it's money, whether it's a new car or whether it's a loved one, you have to suffer for it in some form or another. You have to suffer and work for it, you know. Nothing is free in life and if you get something free you better be cautious about it, you know. And I mean like I can do anything 'cause really if you think about it - if you dance for four days in the pissing rain and the hot sun with no shelter, you know, without eating or drinking any water, and then at the end, tie yourself to a tree and like, pierce through your chest, and rip it off with pegs through your flesh, you know, if you can do that, man, and then go into a sweat lodge in the mornings, you know, a hot sweat lodge and you're thirsty, you know,... (laughter)....

M: Yeah.

A: fuck, there isn't a thing you can't accomplish, man. You know, if not spiritually then those that don't understand our spiritual frame of thought, I tell them that, eh. I tell them the scientific aspect of Sundance. If you can fuckin' do that, there isn't a damn thing on earth you can't do. you know. Because that kind of psychological

empowerment, and you think, Holy Crap I did that, I mean, geez, you go through a year and any challenge that you get, is like phfft...because your coping skills are so much better. Your ability to deal with high stress situations that are causing you a lot of emotions and that - you get to deal with them because you just think - at least, I'm not hanging off a tree right now by my chest. [laughter] with my lips cracking from thirst, you know, and to this day, my whole life I realize I was protected. There is so many times that I should have been dead. I should have died when I was three years old - I almost drowned at my lake up on the trap line. The canoe tipped and right before the canoe tipped I remember my uncle, A, saw a big, great white owl circling above us and then our canoe tipped and I drowned and my mother resuscitated me and brought me back to life. And I should have died when I was eighteen. Actually I was on acid, so that's I guess that's when my heart _____ and I was running around in a tee-shirt when it was 11 - for 5 hours and I went into hypothermic shock and my heart, like, quit and my whole nervous system shut down and my cousin called an ambulance and they got me up; they brought me back, resuscitated me, spent the night in the hospital and left in the morning to go get high again. [laughter]

M: What a life you've lead.

A: Yeah, so you learn a lot and you learn to appreciate things, you know. You learn to appreciate things and really there's nothing you can't achieve - like, I fuckin' hate people, I don't hate people but I really get agitated with people when I hear them telling a young person whose dreaming - who is talking about their dreams. "Well, that's quite a big, ambitious goal you got there, Maybe you should start off a little smaller." I hate that, what a sick thing to tell a person whose dreaming. What a sick way to stomp out idealism? Idealism is a beautiful thing - that's a beautiful part of being an adolescent. It's a beautiful part about being young, you know. Did you ever see that commercial by IBM?

M: Which one?

A: It's the one that - ah, it's just epic. It's won like best commercial of the year. It's the one that shows Gandhi and Albert Einstein and all these guys that did all these incredible things and this voice narrating talking about how, you know, there are those of that want to change the world this and that and it goes on and on... and then it says Well, sometimes it is the crazy ones.....or no, what does it say "there's those of us that are crazy enough not to listen to them, and crazy enough to actually end up changing the world, you know. And it shows all these faces, eh , like Albert Einstein, etc. and that's what I believe in, eh. I suppose that's why I'm good at giving empowerment workshops and leadership development and that kind of thing, but I hate that when people tell you that because I've been told my whole life "Oh, you're going to end up dead... Oh, you're going to end, you know, in jail.....Oh, you're going to, you know, whatever,

....and fuck 'em all. Look at me now. You know, and I guarantee when I graduate people will be head-hunting for me,

M: Yeah.

A: and that's not to be arrogant, that's not to be, you know, "knock on wood" and I don't want to sound like a ... I love putting my arms about myself but I can....I work fucking hard, you know. And I tell anybody else that too, eh. You work hard - feel good about yourself. Feel really good about yourself and don't be afraid to express that. And I know that.

Just like - I told everybody for a year "Oh yeah, I'm going to next year." and everybody saying "Yeah, right". And it was like, a month before the conference and said "Shit, I should get some money, eh" and I pulled it off.

, a youth organization, said we should start a youth council, "Nah, you'll never do it - government will never give a bunch of kids money". Look at us now - we now - we now receive, your know, we're funded over a thousand a year of funding to do our programming here in the city.

The , all those fuckin assholes at the AFM go like "You'll never pull this off...nah, nah,...." "It'll take like 5 years". and boom, we did it in one year and it screwed them up and they all hate because of it. Because it makes more work for them.

Same thing with the , we created that. We wrote the resolutions, pushed it through at the annual general meeting, everything.

And whenever I'm talking about those things I always like to say WE, eh, because I didn't do it alone, I had friends, that I asked for help and they helped me and I helped them.

So cheers any other questions.

M: Okay. I think we covered number one, what do you think?

A: Okay.

M: Just a second, yeah, okay.

A: What were the most difficult problems for you?

M: Yeah, what are they?

A: Finding out who I was. Why life was so fucked up?

M: So, your identity.

A: Yeah, that was the hardest thing for me.

How did I handle it? Well, with lots of support and love from my family and people out there who are seeking to teach young native men about who they are, eh. I don't speak on behalf of girls eh because like I don't know about young women.

You know, being helped eh and also to just having a support mechanism. Everybody needs a support mechanism where they are trying to achieve great goals. And whether that great goal is , you know. like, quitting drugs or starting up a huge investment firm or whatever, we need a support system for the hard times and my support system is my culture, my traditions, Sundance, my lodge, the sweat lodge, my pipe, you know, those things. That's my support. You know, that's what empowers me. When I feel weak, I smoke my pipe. I take out my drum and I sing and after that I feel fuckin' amazing.

A What are your sources of strength? My family, my community, and my bundle - my ceremonies. Those are my sources of strength. Our history is my strength, you know, the knowledge of our history, the pre-colonial and the knowledge to - what we went through to get to where we are today. That's my strength. And my family, eh.

A Did your way of managing change over time? Yes, the way I coped with things back in my drug days like forgetting - to do drugs, and **now**, you know, I have support systems in place, I have people I can talk to when I'm stressed out and family, you know. I can go eat at a good restaurant and get some good company and food in stead of eating noodles.

A: And what do I think has the most positive affect on me?
The Sundance at . My uncle's sundance, the Cree Sundance.

A: And what would you say made the biggest difference for you? My future wife never giving up on me.

A: Some people found that having a close, caring relationship with someone during their childhood made a difference for them. Have you found this to be true in your life?

Well, yeah, me and my mom , like I didn't really talk about her much. She had her problems but we were best friends. She had me when she was seventeen and we were best friends eh. Now she didn't start drinking until I was like 9 or 10. But for my whole childhood she was sober eh. Like when she was...when I was like five and under, you know, we'd spend nights at movies and we could see 2 movies in a row. That was how my young years were spent when times weren't rough, eh. Just her taking care of me and loving me. Like I had every toy you could imagine, you know. She was poorer but you'd never know it by it, because I had all the nice clothes. It's always been that way my whole life, eh. and I had all the nice runners, the Nike Airs, and all that. She always

spoiled me, eh. Because of where she came from - the little _____ school, raising all her little fuckin' brothers and sisters, you know, getting raped and all that stuff, you know. Never at the hands of my mother, did I ever come under harm. It was with the hands of other people that were in my mother's life.

M: Hmmm.

A: that I can honestly say that. Other than the time she broke up. (hey take it easy bro....I get along with him too....my cousin) And it made a big difference for me - I mean we're best friends today; you know we talk about everything. Actually, some people are disgusted with our relationship 'cause we stick together - we're not like mother and son - we're like two good friends. {The movie joke} was very harsh and rude, you know.

M: When things get tough how do you usually handle it?

A: I pray, I pray, I pray and I draw from my experiences in life and compare to life situations that I've gone through. I pray to the creator for strength, for courage and all those good things [that we deal with situations on a case every day]..

A: And circumstances that you changed?

M: that you can change?

M: How do you usually handle the circumstances that you can change?

A: I change it and I do it good.

A: People hate me for it

M: Hmmm.....hmmm Can you

A: Oh yeah, yeah. If I want to do something, it's done and I don't stop until it's done. And in circumstances you can't change, well I accept them and then I find alternatives. But that's a very broad question, eh, circumstances that you can't change like 'cause dealing with my death is a lot different than the fact that you've been fired or ...do you know what I mean, Like it's a very broad question so my response would be different pending on that... like the question that brought my response would be "Like I find something else, I move on."

A: What advice would give to a young person who is experiencing the same kind of struggles with life? What advice have you gained from your experience?

Nothing comes for free in life. If you want something work for it. Money, hah, it's free - I'll get you all the money you want, I you got to do is work for it. That's what I tell young

people. You want nice clothes. Fuck, so do I. I work for some. Want some drugs.....you better work for it - you're going to suffer. Maybe, not so harsh eh. But that's what I'm thinking, eh..

M: But you give it to them straight.

A: Yeah. Do you think you're resilient? Yeah, man., really resilient. I should be dead but I know the creator has been watching out because he's got plans for me - not to say that I have like you know, what's that called, Messiah syndrome or Messiah complex but I honestly believe I'm going to go out and change the world. You'll see me out there. The way I look at it is if I can do this much in 3 years when I'm think of what I can do, when I have the respect of age. (You know, there'd be a big block with the age gap right now.) I have a difficult time working with certain people because they cannot relate to a younger person. They don't have the skills - they can't understand intelligence or thoughts coming from my mind because I'm not old enough yet.

M: Ummm.hmmmm.

A: A lot of people get intimidated by me, because I intimidate them, you know what I'm talking about. Especially when I have my professional hat on. Like we're talking _____ year right now, but what I'm talking about like work stuff and like doing my job, you know, whether it's affecting national policy on young people or whatever, you know, I'm a totally different person. I'm very professional. Different, so people, so people get tripped out. Yeah, I think I'm resilient.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your story?

M: No.

A: No, I feel completion. That's it. Good luck!

Appendix D
Interview with D

M: Can you tell me just a little bit about yourself, how you got to be at this place at this time?

D: In the Spring of – that was around the time my mom and dad got together, before I was even conceived, so I won't even go back that far. I was born and raised in . I predominantly spent most of my life growing up in the on and . I lived in about five or six different houses in the community. Growing up we called it the . Although I was in a small Native community with a lot of low income families in there – single parents, I had a real tough time with being an Indian, because I was proud to be an Indian but I'd kill you if you called me one – that type of thing.

M: So you were conflicted about your identity?

D: Well basically to me, growing up an Indian got drunk, left for five days at a time, beat up his family and that's all I knew about Aborigines. I didn't know about the spirituality and about the medicine of healing, the teachings and things like that. I didn't know any of that. I was lucky in that being raised by my mom – predominantly by women, my aunts – all my aunts and my mom was single. My grandmother wasn't single, she was fortunate to have a real supportive husband – he was my mom's step-dad. They were really good people. I had a really blessed upbringing. I was brought up to respect as much as possible, and respect everybody I meet, and to pay them at least the respect of being a human being. Then I discovered alcohol and that kind of went out the window.

M: How old were you?

D: Actually, my dad in his disease, gave me a joint for my 7th birthday and made me smoke it with him.

M: So young?

D: Yeah, I was young. I discovered alcohol from a very early age just for the fact that my dad was a very heavy drinker. I'm going to probably jump from year to year and time frame to time frame. Growing up, all through my life until I was twenty, I wanted to emulate my dad in every way. My dad was very famous. My name is , but I grew up with the name . Back in the 70's and 60's the and the , my dad's best friends, were brothers in the family. There was a reputation that was built and I tried to emulate that as much as possible once I became eleven or twelve years old myself. Self images really started to form and grow so I did the best as I could to be as bad as I could as far as things like that were concerned. Still keeping in mind my mothers and aunts and grandmother trying to talk to me about respect. What I did is I turned it into me respecting everybody immediately, and then the moment that anybody disrespected me or didn't deserve my respect, then it was okay to whatever, fight, tell them to screw themselves, or whatever. I grew up with a philosophy taught by my dad that when in doubt, punch out. So, I had a violent upbringing, but of course I was justifying myself

and rationalizing it all the time with just being respectful, and they disrespected me, so they deserved whatever they got.

I smoked my first joint at seven and didn't smoke anything again until I was 9, 10, or 11. I'm not exactly positive. I started smoking cigarettes at 8. I haven't stopped yet. I have to have my vice. I love Bingo and my cigarettes. Growing up in the [redacted] in the [redacted] developments I went to [redacted] until grade 3, and then in grade 3, about that time my mom got off social assistance and got a job at a pizza place and was being subsidized. She ended up getting a job at [redacted] and she became a [redacted] and she got a better income. So we moved out of the [redacted] and into an apartment block on [redacted] – like the Jefferson's we moved on up and went to the [redacted]. That was probably the worst year and a half of my life.

M: How come?

D: Because going from a predominantly Native community – and again I like to think of [redacted] as a community because everybody knew each other and it was in and of itself. You didn't say you from the [redacted], you'd say you from [redacted]. That's what the [redacted] was called, we called it [redacted]. There's theories about why it was called [redacted], but I think it had to do with all the Natives there and the [redacted] and things like that. That was the way we identified ourselves. We said we were from [redacted] of course had its reputation. All my friends in [redacted] or even the [redacted], they'd say, "Oh, don't go through [redacted]. Even in the daytime, you're going to get your hair cut. You're going to get beat up and attacked," and all these crazy, silly things. Of course we didn't do anything to dispell that. We'd say, "Make sure if you're coming you run to my house. Once you get to my house you're okay. As soon as you hit [redacted], you run." It was a laugh. It was funny. But looking back on it, that's rather silly.

So getting back to that worst year of my life, I went from a predominantly Native community to being [redacted] – when I went to [redacted] there was me and my brother, and that I know of for sure, two other Native children in the whole school. Being that I was living on [redacted] and having to school on [redacted], it was about a 15-minute walk, and I was fortunate enough that my grandfather bought me a bicycle – me and my brother. We hated that bike because we got chased a lot. There were a lot of times we got chased and tormented and beat up because we were Native. For me growing up, if I didn't say anything, people wouldn't have known. Because I've been mistaken for Portuguese. I have very curly hair, so most people mistook me for being part black. In the summer time we used to get very dark and with the curly hair, a lot of people would look at my mom and wonder. Because my mom was very fair-skinned, but she had black hair. Until I was twelve, I didn't even look like my dad. But when I turned twelve, more of my Native features came out. If I hadn't said anything I wouldn't have had any trouble. My dad always told me, "You're an Indian, and be proud of that." Now I'm not an Indian anymore, I'm Anishnabe. I understand that Columbus was lost. He was dying and starving, and he was delirious because he thought he was an Indian. So I'm not an Indian. I teach my kids that to the best of my ability.

Living in _____ was really tough. I think it was there that I got my anti-white thing happening. From _____ we moved to the _____. My mom met a man through work who was a truck driver and delivered steel to the _____. They met and he was a real prick, if you'll pardon the language. He treated us very badly unbenounced to my mom. My mom seemed very happy so I didn't want to wreck that so I didn't say anything until the end. When it was obvious to me that she was reconsidering this relationship, then I gave my input and then we left. We got out safely. We didn't have to worry. He wasn't a stalker. He was just a little man. Once out he found out who my dad was and my dad's brothers and friends, he didn't have too much to say. Like I said, the reputation was there. If you wanted to die, then go ahead and mess with them. Again, being chased and tormented and constantly receiving, "Dirty Indian, Savage, Squaw Hopper, Prairie Nigger, and instead of being called a Jungle Bunny like a black person, I was called a Forest Rabbit. So really there were some pretty smart kids that were able to come up with these wonderful euphemisms.

Once I started drinking and doing drugs heavily I kind of got an anti-white thing going. I can say right now, since 1989 I've been clean and sober, and there's a reason for that. The reason being that I was an extremely terrible, terrible person when I was drunk. I know now that I got drunk specifically so I could be that terrible, terrible person. Because when I was sober I was really friendly and outgoing and rambunctious and fun. But you get the firewater in me and I'm an Indian. I was doing a lot of the hard drugs, and most of the drug use that I was doing was that so I could supplement my drinking. I would smoke marijuana so I wouldn't puke, I would do cocaine so I wouldn't pass out, I would do Ativan or Valium or Xanax – if I could get a hold of them – the next day so that I wouldn't be so sick. Of course taking Valium's or Benzodiazepans, you won't sleep. Then I would do speed. Of course being part of that circle that my dad invented or started – I emulated him – the drugs that my dad did, I did. Shortly after I turned fifteen I adopted his nickname, _____. Anybody who knows some of the horror stories coming out of the _____ in the 70's, they know who _____ is – that was my dad. In the 80's, that was me. To make that long story short, I killed _____ in 1989 when I quit drinking.

My whole life, I've been pretty blessed. There were some pretty lean times. I was hungry a lot. Not because my mom was out drinking and partying and stuff. We were hungry because mom tried to make our home look nice. We had good furniture. Christmas's and birthdays were good. We always got new clothes for school. That was the only time we got clothes was school, birthdays, and Christmas. Of course keeping the house in good shape. So there was a time we went hungry for awhile. Or you ate beans five days a week and Kraft Dinner the other two days. I have to say that I know a lot of people that had it a hell of a lot worse. With my neighbours, people who lived right beside me, my cousins, friends, people who gave from various Native communities in Manitoba or Saskatchewan, the poverty and the third world conditions that are there. I was living like a king compared to them. I never took it as a "poor me" thing. I was "poor me" when I wanted to excuse myself. I can honestly say I've never used my Nativeness as an excuse for my lot in life. I never said, "It's because I'm an Indian that I

didn't get this job," or "It's because I'm an Indian . . ." I got things and I didn't get things because of merit. Yeah, maybe somebody didn't appreciate my Nativeness because I was very up front. Maybe that was a motivator, but that's their loss not mine. I wouldn't want to work for a person like that.

So that's about it. That's not about it, but as far as not knowing what a Native person or Anishnabe, what that was to me, that's where that all came from – from all the alcohol and the drugs, the fighting and the stripe of attitude that we all carried. It was all of us. None of my cousins, none of my family, even my dad – my dad remembers from when he was a little boy . . . Actually this is a really cool story. He remembers and I remember when I was a little boy, my Grandpa – we used to call him – when we would do something bad he would hiss at us and then pray in . . . We used to think he was evil. Then when my dad cleaned up and went to his first Sweat, and when I cleaned up – actually I went to my first Sweat before I cleaned up. I got into the Sweat and I was scared of everything. I was feeling really, really bad and scared, not knowing what was going to happen and hearing things. Just coming up to my very first Sweat, these are the things I heard. The **** went down and the lodge keeper asked the ***** to burn tobacco and then I heard the water hit the rocks and then praying. It was like the whole **** lit up and I said, my grandpa's not evil. There was a connection. My dad and Uncle and even my Auntie – that sound brought them back to when they were children and Grandpa would be hissing at the kids. That was really uplifting. It was like a spiritual awakening. Once I discovered that Nativeness, that part of being Native – like I said, an Indian got drunk and beat his family and would disappear for five days at a time – I embraced it. I hung on with my toes and my fingers and didn't let go. It wasn't immediate – I continued drinking and that for awhile. But it was like once I started that and was told by the lodge keeper, "You don't use alcohol and drugs, and the reason why. The reason he told me – I know there's different reasons, it's all the same but different – he told us and I really accept this and I accommodated it into my thinking, the reason why the Native people didn't drink alcohol was because it comes from rotten plant matter. The fermentation process is rotting. What happens during the fermentation process is the spirit of the plant leaves. So you're drinking of the dead. Anishnabe people know there is a spirit in everything. Obviously if the spirit is taken away from something, it can't be good for us. It doesn't really explain much about the drugs, but the alcohol for sure. It's really odd that they call hard liquor spirits. I point that out working here with the boys in the group home and talking about drinking and things like that. It makes them think. If anything, hopefully they'll remember that and think about it next time they get juiced.

M: In all of that, what would you say is the hardest thing? The most difficult challenge?

D I haven't gotten there yet. I can tell you a lot of my hardships – I was a victim of sexual abuse when I was about five years old from a male babysitter. He got me and my brother to perform felatio on his him for a donut, and that was tough. The usual feelings about that are, "Am I gay," and things like that. Once I realized what became of it and able to understand it more, it became really hard to deal with. I had gone through

a lot of emotional turmoil about my sexuality and why that person did that to me. It carried on – I was able to deal with it quite effectively just by talking about it. I carried it with me for about thirteen years. When I was eighteen I talked with my mom about it. Of course my mom went through all her things – “I didn’t know, I’m sorry.”

M: Was this the first time you talked.

D: Yes. But once I talked about it – like I said, I’ve been blessed in that I was really able to talk about it. I went through a course when I was working at , we went through a program called “ ,” and it helped to deal with getting in touch with your inner childhood into finding spots where you were stagnating. It’s that program that was started at . It was a documentary called . It’s about the Native community that was 95% alcoholic and went to 95% alcoholic-free. So that was good. And that was good too because I was able to talk about it again. Through various counselling that I’ve taken from being with my ex and with family that I started there. She was a victim of sexual abuse as well, but the difference between us was that she stayed a victim and I went from a victim to a survivor to a warrior. My thinking of it is that I’m not going to let it get me down and I’m going to do what I can to help other people, like children, know that that’s not allowed – that’s wrong. It’s not your fault. The things which are why I’m doing this type of work – one of the reasons why I’m doing this type of work. I wanted to let kids know that life wasn’t always a kick in the pants. For a lot of us it was.

The most difficult thing in life that I’ve had to deal with yet was my relationship with my ex. I was clean and sober when I met her. She had a daughter from a previous relationship. I ended up falling in love with the girl before I fell in love with the mom. I made the mistake of admitting that. She became my daughter, and I became her dad – the only dad she’s ever known. I moved very quickly in the relationship. We met in August, we were living together in September and we were pregnant by February. It was a very codependent relationship, a very emotionally abusive relationship – in her part to me – and mental and what not, and then it became emotionally and verbally abusive after a while with me. My favourite thing for her was “bitch.” I called her “bitch” all the time. Even then I knew, I was calling her a “bitch,” but I could have just as easily called her a grouch. But I got stuck in a relationship through my wanting to prove to her that I did want to be with her, and wanting to prove to her that I want to grow with this child. Unfortunately, in her insecurity she thought that I would never fully bond with my daughter so she always hit me with that. After a while it became a spite thing, “I’m going to prove to you that I’m going to make this relationship stick,” and I did that for seven years off and on. I finally broke away in . I quit work here. We had separated and had a reconciliation. She went out to and left me with the girls and contacted me from and was telling me that she was getting the help that she needed for all this time. She admitted all this. She never admitted any wrongdoing before. I was always wrong, and I was always just trying to blame her. She finally admitted something and it kind of took me away because I still had some sort of desire to make it work. So she told me she was getting help and that there was lots of work out there. So I thought about and talked with my daughters about it, and they wanted the family together. For a

large part I wanted the family together so we did. I quit here and got all my vacation pay and everything out, and it cost me to move out there. I got out there and bought \$400 worth of groceries and she showed me the door. She fooled me. She fooled all of us.

So there I was in . I had quit my job. She was telling me there was all this work out there with kids, "They're looking for Native workers with knowledge of the culture." I went out there and found out I couldn't get welfare because of the residency laws, I couldn't get unemployment because I quit, and I was stuck. So I ended up coming back a week later and then I went and sought spiritual help and healing. Through my Uncle – he's a Medicine Man, a lodge keeper – and for a long time he was my very best friend – the best friend I ever had. The best friend I ever had treated me with as much respect I could have ever been treated with. He told me when I was shitting, he told me when I was bullshitting, and he told me when I was doing good. He was right up front. I went to him and said, "Look what I've done. Look at the way things have gone." I've actually tried together with my partner to see him and go and try and heal our relationship and make it work. It was always either I didn't do enough work or she didn't do enough work. So he told me, "No, I'm not going to help you, you don't want to do the work." I said, "No, I've had a lot of time to think about this, and my eyes opened up being stuck in a city and having to come back and be brave enough to say that I got smoked." It was when I was brave enough to say it and face it that he said, "Okay." So I went to four sweats and took medicines. I got it all out – everything. I assaulted her in 1996. It was push came to shove and I shoved back and I got charged with assault. It was one of the best things that happened to me there too. I learned some things about anger management and victim awareness. It was really beneficial. I am proud to say that my probation officer was sad to see me go, and sad to see that he wouldn't be seeing me anymore because I had accepted my part in everything. I accepted my responsibility and wanted to ***** and make amendments. I couldn't really make amendments to her for assaulting her, but I could make amendments to myself and my boss. Obviously I was at risk for losing my job with a violence offense. That was one of the things that got me – I'm not going to say off – but got me the break that I got was the fact that I was open and up front with my boss knowing I could lose my job and walking into court the first day and pleading guilty. So the judge gave me a three-year conditional discharge. As long as I did the anger management and domestic violence and completed my probation. And I did.

M: So what do you think has had the most positive effect on your life?

D: My wife. I got married to the most beautiful woman in the world. We met before I went out to . There was electricity and whatnot, but I didn't think that – I was still stuck in that relationship with my ex. When I came back she was one of the people that supported me. She was the first woman to ever ask me out on a date. That sure stroked my ego. We fell in love and we've been going together since – our first date was and I think we spent maybe four 24-hour periods away from each other since then to this day. We have our disagreements and fights, but when we argue, we both acknowledge we're upset. We don't want to say something we don't mean or are going

to regret. So we both take a time out and we don't go to bed mad. Everybody says that – it's a cliché actually. Don't go to bed mad and everything will be okay. That's what we do. Sometimes we're up until 5:00 a.m., but we don't go to bed mad. She treats me like a king and I treat her like a queen. She's been supportive of me. She knew that I assaulted my ex, she knew of the constant going back and leaving. She understood why and my understanding of it. She was straight up. She would tell me when I was shitting. She would tell me when I was bullshitting, and she would tell me when I was doing good.

We got married, we bought a house and we're going to have our second Christmas together. She's the only person that ever gave me unconditional love. I think that's what it was. With my dad it wasn't unconditional love because the condition was that he would see me when it was good for him. With my mom, she loved me but she would show me the love when I was doing good. If I was doing bad, then boy watch out. Same thing with all my previous relationships. It was conditional on my part, too. I went through a lot of relationships with the condition that I get my way. Now with [redacted] and I, we are in a codependent relationship, but we like to say it's a healthy codependent relationship because if I were to die her life would flash before my eyes, and if she were to die, my life would flash before her eyes.

M: So you guys are solid?

D: Yeah, we're comfortable with each other.

M: Some people have said that having a close, caring relationship has made the difference for them – but that's from the time they were little – do you have anybody like that in your life?

D: My uncle. He's not actually my uncle, he's my spiritual uncle. I adopted him as an uncle. My grandmother – my Nana. My Nana was a very cool person. When my mom was fifteen – we're talking 1967 – she had a black boyfriend. She had a string of black boyfriends – three or four – and my grandmother accepted it, not based on their skin, just based on their humanness. That's one of the things that my Nana is so cool about. There were a lot of times where that was really frowned on, it was worse than a black couple, but to be a mixed race couple. My Nana instilled that in my mom and she instilled that in all of her grandchildren, that colour of skin doesn't mean anything. Black people can be better than white people, white people can be better than black people, Natives can be better, and Chinese can be better. It's what's inside. So I would have to say that although I was close with my mom I went through my difficulties with her, but my Nana, my Uncle and my wife [redacted]. Those are my three real, real relationships – real strong, keep my going type things.

M: So what would you say are your sources of strength?

D: My connection to *****, my spirituality, and the gift of gab (my ability to talk), because if I bottle things then I'm fighting a losing battle. You know, my ability to talk about things – to take a risk and talk about bad things that I've done or bad things that have happened to me – because of being able to talk about it I'm able to grow.

M: And heal, would you say?

D: Yes. I've done a lot of healing and healing where there's no serious scars left. I've been blessed. I can't complain at all.

M: So now when things get tough for you, how do you usually handle it?

D: Talking it out. If I can't find anybody to talk to, then I'll write it out or I'll go work on a car. I'm good with my hands. I'm mechanically inclined, so I do a lot of working on cars, or hammer a nail, or fix something in the house. That's another thing that and I do when if we're not getting along – if it's impossible to take a physical time-out away from each other where one of us can't leave (on a really cold day or something like that), then I'll go to the basement and putter around or she'll go putter around. Actually we both share the basement. We both do our own work on projects. We haven't gotten to a point where we're fighting about who's going to get the basement, so if that happens then I'll go to the garage. But talking it out and praying. Although I can say I haven't had to do much praying, and I should, but I say my thanks every day. I pray, work it out, talk it out, take your time-outs. I don't isolate, but being by myself to reflect, and doing the best that I can to be honest. If I screw up then I have to own up to it, and I do for the most part.

M: So what do you do if things get tough and it's something that you can't change?

D: Something that I can't change then – like it's absolutely no matter whatever negotiating I do or talking it out I do that I just will not be able to . . .

M: You can't change it.

D: Then I have to accept. Like a situation at work or at home, there's things you just can't change and that's the way it is. You have to accept it. That's one of the things about being spiritual and understanding that there is no coincidences and things happen for a reason. To try and look at the positives in everything and every bad situation – you try and look for a positive. I may not like the situation and there may not be a damn thing I can do to change it, but maybe something good will come of it down the road. Accept it, sometimes grudgingly, but accept it and move on.

M: So would you say that's true of all of the bad times in your life, that you've accepted it, tried to find the positive in it, including being abused?

D: Being abused was not one of them. I didn't do that until much later. Probably when I went through that healing and found that relationship there, I healed a lot of things. But that I accepted as it happens all the time and it happened to me. Thank God I didn't go and offend and I didn't continue that cycle. I'm doing something to change that cycle by trying to instill in children or kids that I work with – teenagers and that – my own children. But for the most part, yeah, look for a positive and then get the hell out. Sometimes no. There are times in my life where I haven't been able to fully accept things and it created more problems for me down the road, and probably when the new problem arose, once I was able to connect it to the first problem and not dealing with it then, I was able to say, "Give your head a shake. Look what's happening now." Before I quit drinking I used to blame God for everything, "Look what you got me into now. Get me out." But now it's, "Thanks for showing me." At the beginning of my walk on the right road when I first cleaned up and accepted my spirituality and embraced it, that together with the grandfathers and grandmothers and the Creator, no matter what obstacle we'd come across, we will get through, over, around, or under. There is no such thing as an impenetrable wall or an impenetrable obstacle. With the grandfathers and grandmothers, I'll find a way. I keep that. Sometimes it takes a little bit longer to find that. And again, I can always just say, "Well, that's the way it goes," and move on, and that's getting through it. It might not be healthy in some situations, but for the most part it's . . . I've been able to quit a job and come back. I went to school for a year and a little bit and I can still go back.

M: So what about tough situations that you can change and do something about?

D: I think for me it's really important that as long as I'm doing it in a respectful way. For instance working with kids or with my wife, if we get into a situation where there's something that I can change, I have to make sure that I'm not going to do it aggressively and that I'm not going to gloat about it after, none of the "I told you so," and to be as supportive and as kind and gentle as possible. Same thing with here; we've got boys that are in a constant state of going back to jail, and just letting them know that crap happens but so do miracles. If you're willing to be honest and own up to the things that you do, things will change. I can't change some behaviours, but I can help the boys change their behaviours. With that it's never gloat and never carry airs about it because then you're making it like you won, and it's not a win-win situation. That is a win-lose type scenario. As long as I make it win-win, everything is okay.

M: What would you tell a young person who came to you with similar kinds of stR in their lives? What insights do you have to share?

D: Basically, with carefully thinking it out, I could tell a lot of my story and tell the things that I did that helped and didn't help me, and remind them that nothing I say or do is going to change their problem. What they say or do will. Given the experiences we have, that you've come to me with something that's similar to me, so you know you're not alone. I could say some people that have experienced the same thing as well just to reinforce that they're not alone. If they can find a way to talk about it, then do. If it's not

with me then with somebody they trust, and somebody they're close to. When in doubt, seek out. That's the biggest thing for me, because that works for me so well – to find somebody that I can talk to about it. If I can't talk with my wife about it, I'll talk with my supervisor or my boss, or my spiritual advisor, or one of my former counsellors who used to work at If nothing else works, just try and come to terms with it and accept it. If you're having a lot of trouble doing that, then seek help again. Find a way to come to terms and accept it. That way you're in a constant state of dealing with the problem. You're not sitting there and letting it build. It could create more anxiety by working on it, but at least it's not the One of the things I talk to the boys about is fear. There's three different acronyms for fear that I use. Fear can be fuck everything and run, and that's where a lot of us are all the time. When we get scared of something, we say forget and we're gone. False emotions appearing real. That's where 95% of our fears are unfounded – like if we're going to sing Karaoke or if we're going to talk to a person who's heard us, a lot of times we think they're going to say, "Fuck you," or "To hell with you," or, "I didn't do anything wrong." A lot of times they'll say, "I didn't know I did that." So there's a false emotion that appeared real, being that fear. And then, face everything and uncover. That's where you attack it, you embrace it, and you hug it, and then you kill it. That doesn't work all the time, but it's had a lot of success with me and with some of the kids that I've worked with. At that time I'm able to say, "Remember that time you did such and such and you were really scared to do it, but once you did it you found out that nobody laughed at you and that everybody actually had a really good time with it?" So it gives them something to hang on to. That's what I would say.

M: Do you think you're resilient?

D: Yeah. I can rebound from most anything. I broke my finger the other weekend. I'm doing okay. I've been blessed. I know there are so many people out there that aren't. My wife works at the and she's dealing with a lot of people that are have a real lack of resiliency. Other people that just choose to live that lifestyle, and me working here I deal with a lot of kids that aren't resilient and aren't able to rebound from something and they just dig themselves deeper, and deeper, and deeper. But I think I am. I think I've been blessed. I've been able to talk about things, and that's a really big gift. With so many Indian people being shy – that's one of the diseases. I was given a teaching about gifts and diseases that the four nations received. Without getting nasty, the white man received greed as a disease, and one of their gifts was their numbers. There's just so many of the white nation. The Asian people, I can't remember. The Native people, their gifts was their spirituality, their art, their ability to express themselves artistically, and their diseases were greed and shyness. Now alcoholism and diabetes and a whole bunch of other ones. There's a lot of Native people that are shy and once they're able to break through that, I think that resiliency will grow and our people will grow. Instead of being Queen's children, we'll be our own.

M: What do you think is missing for the kids that are not resilient? Have you seen anything that ties them together?

D: Lack of structure. They're just kind of fending for themselves emotionally, mentally, spiritually, physically, and because they're fending for themselves, when you're a baby, you have to be with somebody to learn how to talk. The same thing goes to learn how to get through your tough times and your good times. A lot of people have a good time and they just spiral. You take a look at the reserve in — they were poor, destitute, and they had nothing. They discovered oil. They all had money, and then they all went downhill because they all instead of making their own alcohol, they started doing cocaine and the other drugs. We have to learn how to get through our good times and our bad times. Being on our own and having to fend for ourselves in a lot of ways is definitely a tie that binds, I notice. Also a serious lack of concern shown by society. You look at the situations on the news — feed the hungry kids in Africa, and feed the earthquake victims in Turkey — you see caring for all these other people, but yet you see your own community and you see that complete poverty, and obvious lack of concern. Those kids all the way across the ocean in Africa are hungry, but so am I. They're not seeing that care. There's a lot of socialization and attitudes about Native people — they're lazy, they're shitless, they're drunks. So we have a lot going against us. We just have to find a way to get them to stand up to that and say, "No, I don't have that much more going against me than anybody else." Also to move forward and not stagnate.

M: So do you think there's anything else that's important about you and your resiliency that I should know about?

D: The fact that I can share. As a member of a community and albeit — I'm only 1/3 Anishnabe, I'm 1/3 Scottish and 1/3 Irish. My lifestyle, which I choose to identify with, is my Nativeness. As a part of that community I have an obligation to share that and to spread as much of the word as I can. I know that it was a gift that I received, and not everybody is born with that gift. I was fortunate enough to be born with it. You can learn that gift. It's like playing an instrument. You can't just pick it up and strum it, you can pick it up and strum it a thousand times and get good at it. You can learn it. It's up to me to be a teacher because I'm a student for 50% of my life and I'm a teacher for 50% of my life. I think that's what's important. All of us resilient Indians have got to go spread the word.

M: Thank you very much.

Appendix E

Interview with P

M: So, can you just tell me about where you are at in your life right now and how you got to be to that point?

P: Where I'm at right now; job wise, or . . . ?

M: Job wise, professionally, personally. Maybe tell me a little bit about yourself and how you got to be at this place at this time.

P: Okay, I guess right now I'm the of I got there having been in the Child Welfare for about years now. So I've kind of moved up the corporate ladder, I guess you could say. At one time I was a Front Line Worker doing investigations on child abuse. I've always worked in and, like I said, I just kind of moved up the ladder. I became a after spending years in an Aboriginal agency in . After that I became an in another northern agency in the area. After that I became the for a few other agencies.

So I'm enjoying my work. I find I can contribute a lot to child welfare by being where I am today. At one point in my life I took, in my years of working in an agency, some time off to do some reviews for ; I worked for doing reviews on and found there was a lot of weaknesses in the system. My contribution to those agencies I found to be helpful because today as we speak they are implementing the recommendations on those agencies. We reviewed five agencies and these are the only mandated agencies in . I played a big part in that. So like I said, I'm happy in that. I don't like the political interference, however I've come to accept that there is going to politics all the time in child welfare until our communities become knowledgeable about child welfare. Hopefully some day they won't be as political as they are right now.

So that's where I'm at today. In terms of personal growth, I find I still have a lot of healing to do myself. I think the healing comes a little bit every day by talking to people and talking to wise people, and so I get the help that I need to carry on my work in a good way and in a positive way, and be objective by not putting my personal needs in front of my work. I find that that's where I'm at today. I've come a long way. I should have been dead a long time ago. I should have been dead a long, long time ago, but I'm alive and I'm thankful for that. Had God or Creator, whatever you want to call it, wanted me to die, I suppose it would have happened, but obviously he wants me here, so here I am. I am years old. I'm a grandmother. I've got grandchildren. My biggest supporters are the Creator first, and then my husband, and then my children and grandchildren, and my mother who is a wonderful human being. I consult with her a lot in my work. She's the one I will phone when I come to her block and she will put these in perspective for me. She is great and fantastic, and she knows child welfare. She had been around for many, many years. That's why I consult with her all the time. She's a pioneer. She's very humble about it.

M: Out of your whole life, what do you think was the most difficult and challenging thing you had to face that could have thrown you off track; the thing that had the most detrimental effect on you?

P: The loss of a child is always the most detrimental, but I think for me the loss of my own childhood was the most detrimental. I had lost a child when I was about years old. But that didn't affect me as losing my own childhood. I was sexually abused at a very young age. It was a relative who sexually abused me and he tormented me in many, many ways and finally raping me at age . I changed then. I became an adult; a very angry adult at that time.

M: Well you lost your childhood in a very cruel way.

P: I couldn't say anything to anybody because he kept me so under his spell, I guess you would say, or under his control.

M: He was manipulating?

P : Very. And he was a family member.

M: So he had access to you.

P: Very much. He wasn't my immediate family member but he was a cousin; an extended family member who was an adult, but he was a very well respected adult in our family and everybody respected him because he made it in this world. He went out and made a living for himself and actually did very well. He's still actually doing very well. So he had access to me and from what I understand, as of seven years ago, he also molested all my sisters and possibly my brothers and cousins.

M: So the whole family was affected?

P: Yeah. But nobody ever spoke about it until most recently.

M: So you just carried that?

P: Yeah. But that wasn't all. That wasn't the only one who molested me. I don't know if you want to talk specific about sexual abuse here. There was also a time when we were separated from our families. We were taken to a residential school and there was a lot of physical abuse there from the people who were supposed to be looking after us. The separation was also a tremendous thing. There was terrible abuse at the residential school. I saw people being sexually abused and physically abused. There was nothing anybody could do except just to watch.

M: So you must really understand about kids who take off in the middle of the night?

P: Oh yeah, for sure.

M: With no shoes and no jacket.

P: Yeah, and then of course with , being involved in our family too. When I was very young I remember saying that my father could no longer feed us so we had to go into care. So there was another separation. Oh my goodness, when I think about that, the loneliness for your family. It was bad. But I was lucky. I call it luck that at I was put in a home where I could see my family all the time, and my siblings weren't so lucky. I was able to access because the lady who took care of me told me I could home whenever I wanted, whenever she wanted to drink. She was also the biggest home brew maker on the reserve so I learned how to make home brew at a very young age. But she loved me and I know that.

I'm going back and forth here all over the place. I'm sure you'll be able to decipher information after. Being there in care, going to residential school, and then from there I graduated to reform school.

M: So you got in trouble?

P: Oh yes, I sure did. I went into for two years. But prior to me going to , I had a nervous breakdown; that's what they call it today. I guess it's what we would call post-traumatic stress nowadays. Nobody knows about this; my coworkers don't know. But I was at where I got intense therapy. But while I was there I never disclosed I was sexually abuse. I didn't.

M: So do you think your therapy was helpful?

P: No, I didn't. I just kind of went from day to day and told them what they wanted to hear and then I got released.

M: So how do you think you were able to overcome all this?

P: I also met a man when I was very young. The man was quite older than me and was not a good man. He abused me. He beat me up and just about killed me a few times. But he taught me a few things. He taught me about life because he was quite a bit older than me, so I was able to pick up some things. At the same time I was able to pick up from other adults, too, that I lived with that I had come across. I was able to pick up a few things that there has got to be a better way. I knew I couldn't live like this. It wasn't a way to live; drinking and getting raped so many times on the reserve. So many times I lost count actually. I lost count a long time ago. But I did it. After a big drunk one time, I had applied to the . I don't know, my father was a very intelligent man, too. I loved my father very much and I loved my mother, but my father was very intelligent. Like you, he always harboured about education. All the time. It was sickening actually. I wanted to do something, I didn't want to be hurt anymore. That

was what it was all about, being hurt all the time. I don't want to be hurt anymore. I don't want any of this pain. I knew about healing a long time ago, way before he talked about ***** needing communities. I knew that I had to get help. I needed to get out of the reserve. So then I applied to the _____ on my own. I found this piece of paper in the newspaper and thought, "This is what I want to do." So I applied. I had met another man by this time. He happened to be in jail for raping another girl from my reserve. While he was in jail I met this other guy who is now my husband. My goodness, the bond, I knew he was the man for me. I knew that he was going to help me.

So I applied to the school, and I remember one time being on a big drunk with him and my mother found me and she said, "P, I want you to quit drinking right now, today. Enough already." So I said, "Why?" She said, "Because I have a letter here I want you to read." So I was reading and I was kind of drunk, "You have been accepted into _____." Because I was very smart you see, I did the test and I passed with flying colours. You have to do this test before you get accepted into the school, you cant' just go in and be accepted. At that time anyway, I don't know what they do now. So I said, "Okay, that's it," I said to my husband, "we're not going to drink anymore. I'm going to school and I'm moving to _____. Are you going to come with me?" He said, "Yeah." So off we went and that was it.

M: That was the turning point for you?

P: That was the turning point for me. That was it for me.

M: What made you – you saw your opportunity that you could change your life and you needed to be different?

P: Yeah I did, and I always knew that I wasn't going to be a piece of meat to anybody. I knew that as long as I stayed on the reserve and as long as I kept drinking, and as long as I was going to be the pathetic little girl that that's what I was going to be. That's where I was going to stay, and I had to get out.

M: How old were you when you when your *****?

P: Twenty or twenty-one.

M: What do you think was your source of strength? Where did that come from?

P: I think it was my will to live and my will to survive. Like I said, I should have been dead. I thought about that too. But I was alive you see. At age twenty, I should have been dead. Of all the times I was tortured, abused, and tried to commit suicide so many times, I should have been dead. I remember the last time I tried to commit suicide, I figured it out. I had it planned. I planned it so good so I would not be found.

M: You were serious.

P: Oh yes, I was serious. So I planned it. It took me two or three days to plan it. I said, "Well nobody is going to find me, so where am I going to go." Nobody ever goes there, but somebody went there when I was hanging. I thought, "What the hell is going on." What was he doing there in the snow? I was so mad.

M: He found you. And what was that like?

P: I was mad at him. I was so mad at him.

M: He ruined your plan and then you had to stay.

P: Then I had to stay I guess. I figured, there's going to be another time for me. There's going to be another opportunity for me. But it never came. There were no more opportunities because I had already done them all. The pills, the slashing and everything. I did them all. This was my last resort. I couldn't go near a railroad track because there was no railroad track where I was, unless I walked. I couldn't go in front of a vehicle because there were not that many vehicles. Our roads are really bad. You'd think about all kinds of ways you could do this. It didn't happen. It didn't surface. The plan never came.

M: When did you shift your thinking from death and ending it to living and living life?

P: I think having met my husband.

M: He's a good guy?

P: Having met the kindest, gentlest soul on this earth, that was when I wanted to live.

M: So would you say he was a source of strength for you?

P: Oh yes, he is. He has come a long way himself. He was also a victim of very bad sexual abuse. We helped each other. We talked. I didn't know about his abuse until about seven years ago though. When I met him he was so nice. He was such a gentle soul. I knew that I wanted to live for him. Then we started having children. Then your whole thinking shifts, hey. Then you want to live for your kids. And I did.

M: So what would you say had the most positive effect on you and your life?

P: I think after I had gotten to school and realized that the vast amount of knowledge out there that I didn't know, that I was so narrow-minded, that I was so seeing things only black and white. There had to be – starting to go to school and learning so much about psychology and sociology and everything, it just blew me away. I wanted to learn, learn, learn. I just wanted to know so much. It just really created a whole different world

for me. A whole different world of why you are the way you are, what made you the way you are, who P was. I didn't know that before.

M: So it helped you make sense of your life?

P: Oh for sure. It made me think, "So that's why I was the way I was." I think I hear Him too. I think it was the education. Definitely I'd say, had it not been for school and had it not been for some of the Profs., I think I would have quit university right away. Some of the Profs., made school a much nicer place to be.

M: So when things get hard for you now . . .

P: And they do.

M: If there's a situation that you can't change, what do you do?

P: I think I've learned not to take on so much. I used to be a caregiver for everybody. When I realize now that there isn't anything I can do, I usually . . . People come to me in bad shape, and I say, "There's nothing I can do about that, but they can do something about that themselves." I give it back to them.

M: So you try and empower people?

P: Yes.

M: So you're clear about the situations that you can't change and that you can?

P: Oh yeah.

M: So if you're faced with a situation that you can change, what is it that you usually do? What is your usual process when a problem comes?

P: If it's something that I can change, well I do the analyzing and assessing in my mind. You try to do it of course. You're going to try and address it. But if you can't you don't give up either. It's there, the problem is there. But if the problem is not mine, I'm not going to take it. But I'll try. I speak my mind quite a bit. Sometimes it's not a very popular position to be in however, after. Hopefully somebody picks up the message.

M: So you're not afraid to put yourself on the line?

P: No. I've done that many times. Oh yeah. I've gotten mad, pouted, and tried to get my way. But hey, you know, it's not mine. But I try. I've been called all kinds of names. I've been called Mother Theresa. I've been called Bleeding Heart. So what I figure. If I can change something, call me what you want.

I don't know if I'm answering your questions properly here, but you know . . .

M: Some people say that they had a significant other in their life from the time they were small to help them along the way. Did you have anything like that in your life?

P: Yes. It was my mother. My mother, although she had been hurt a lot in her life too, I think she was always there for us. A lot of the time she didn't understand our behaviours. I can't blame her for that because I never told her why I did the things I did, but she was always there.

M: Even to this day she is always there.

P: Yes. I remember a situation where I was very angry at a community person in one of the communities I work with and I phoned her and I said, "You know he's really being mean to me mom, he's blasting me," and all this. She said to me, "Why are you where you are today?" I said, "Well I'm here to try and make a better life for some of the kids." "Well there you go," she said, "What's the problem?" I said, "The problem is this guy." She said, "He's not the problem, you are. You are taking on too much. You're taking this personally. Who are you to take this personally? You are in this field because you want to help, you're not any help if that's the way you're going to be taking everything so personally. You shouldn't be where you work. Quit your job today and come home." And that scared me, I thought, "I'm not going to go home. I don't want to quit my job." She just said it like it was. Don't be there if you're going to be taking everything personally. You don't belong there.

M: That helps; a perspective about what's important and what's not. Are you able to do that for yourself?

P: I'm a deep thinker. I do a lot of thinking. I think deeply about things when I travel. I could do that in my mind. Sometimes I need help.

M: And when you need help, where do you go and get that? Do you have someone you can talk to?

P: Yeah, I do. I try not to rely so much on my coworkers or my people at work. I don't want to tax them too with my problems. But overall, I do have some close friends that I consult with or talk to about, "this is what I'm going through today." Not every day, I don't bother them every day. There are days when I just have to phone somebody far away, and he helps me. This is another gentleman I have a lot of respect for. He kind of helps me.

M: So you were when you went into social work, right?

P: About . . .

M: So, did you know then that you were going to go into [redacted] ? Is that why you . . . ?

P: No, I didn't know I was going to go into [redacted] then.

M: How did you make your decision to do the work that you do?

P: I thought I was going to work into the [redacted]. That was my big thing was to try and change the [redacted]. That was my big thing. That's where I wanted to be and that's where I wanted to go. I wasn't making any inroads to that though. My voice was too small then. I wasn't capturing the people I wanted to capture. So in 19 [redacted] there was a position opening in [redacted] and it was in [redacted], so I was hired in [redacted], and that's when I realized that this is where I want to be. In 19 [redacted], and I've been there since. That's where I want to stay now. Then I figured I had something to contribute. I find I made a good decision. I think I made the right decision. I know I did.

M: What advice would you give to a young person if they came to you with the same kind of struggles that you had in life? What would you tell them?

P: I would give them hope. There's hope for everybody. There is hope. You can be whatever you want to be, just give them the tools. I really, really believe that. Because I got the tools.

M: What would you say the tools were?

P: Knowledge for sure, and education. That's a big thing. Mentors, I had mentors who walked me through. Second year in university I had hope, and there was a lady there that I will never forget that put me in my place. I said to her, "Twenty years from now, I'm not going to be with 'so and so'," – that day I was mad at him. She says to me, "That's the most awful thing I ever heard in my life. Who are you to predict what's going to happen in twenty years' time? You don't create your own path." I looked at her and I said, "What are you talking about?" She said, "You don't create your own path. You come and see me in twenty years' time and you tell me where you are." I think about those words, and I think about them all the time. Yes, that's right, we don't. As long as we have faith in Creator and God, or whatever you believe in. I think that's what sustained me. That's really sustained me.

M: So, spirituality?

P: Yes, spirituality. The power of prayer is so great, you know. That's helped me. It's helped me forgive people. Oh that's the other thing I wanted to bring out here today, forgiveness. Without forgiveness I don't think I would be where I am today as well. I had to forgive a lot of people that hurt me. I had to forgive them, and I did it.

M: How did you learn forgiveness?

P: I don't know whether it's innate or . . . I don't know if it was in me, but again I think it had to do with my belief system, and knowing that I couldn't judge everybody, or judge people that harmed me. I knew somewhere along the line these people – I don't think they woke up one day and said, "I'm going to sexually abuse 'P' today." I don't think that's the way it happens. I don't think so. I know I don't wake up in the morning and say, "I want to tell a clerk off today." I found it in my heart to forgive people. Somebody said to me the other day, "How can you shake that person's hand after what he did to you? How can you smile? Aren't you hypocritical?" I said, "No, I forgave that person a long time ago." I think if you cannot forgive you cannot go ahead in this world. I think if you live in hatred and anger and hurt, and whatever, I don't think you can get anywhere here. I'm speaking very simply here. But that's the way I feel. I have to forgive, I had to forgive.

M: To let it go I guess, hey?

P: Yeah, so I could move on. I think about that a lot. If I did not forgive so and so, or so and so, or so and so, could you imagine, I would be so full of hate and anger. I'd be miserable I think. I don't want to live like that. I was given an opportunity. I should have been dead today, but I am alive today. Somewhere, someplace, God said, "P, you've got something to contribute here on this earth and you're going to do it. And the way you are going to do it is 1. Forgiving people, and 2. Being kind to people and not being selfish. That's the way I am. I've got a big, big heart. Sometimes I get criticized for having a big heart, but look at where I am today because of my big heart. Look at where I am today. I never, ever thought that I'd be sitting where I am today. It's got nothing to do with power. Absolutely not, because titles don't mean anything to me. I never thought that I would be running an agency of this magnitude.

M: And affecting change.

P: That's right. I never thought. And the salary I get, I never dreamed.

M: But don't you think it fits with your history that you would do this work and that it makes so much sense?

P: Yeah, I do, and I accept that with a lot of *****, I really do.

M: It just makes sense that you would do this work.

P: I think somebody up there was looking after me. Somebody was up there.

M: So you're on the path.

P: Yes. I believe that everybody walks on this earth for a reason. I really believe that. I try and get young people to listen to that, especially kids that have been sexually abused and so hurt. That's what I say to them when I talk to them, or when I get the

opportunity to talk to them. I do get a lot of opportunities to speak in public. I say very simply, "You're needed on this earth and don't you dare try killing yourself, because we need you. You have something that we need. If you do yourself in, we'll never know what you had to offer."

M: Do you think that you're resilient?

P: Oh yes, I really think I am. I'm not a wounded soldier you know.

M: What do you think makes the difference between a person who is able to overcome really hard times in their life and get on track and somebody who just isn't able to do it?

P: I often wish when those things are said to me or are told to me through my workers, I can reach anybody. If I could talk to that person, give me the opportunity to talk to that person. I will reach them. Boy if they heard my story.

M: So you would offer hope? And you think that's the difference is that some people have hope and other people don't have hope?

P: But I think those people that don't have hope is because they think they are the only ones walking around on this earth that have been really hurt, cause they feel alone. Because I felt alone many times.

M: I think that's true too.

P: There was one time when I lost a child. I was raped very badly when I was pregnant, and the baby died because of the rape. It was a horrible, horrible assault on my person. I think about that. The anger, the hurt, and oh . . . so much hurt there.

M: Was that your first?

P: Yeah.

M: You know what, I have to share something with you. I met with a woman last week and she was telling me her story, the same way you're telling me your story, and she lost a baby too and she said that was bad. Then she said that she went and talked to an old woman about it because she was feeling so awful. She said the old woman gave her a teaching about babies that are lost, that never come to be alive in this world by abortion, by miscarriage, that die in the womb. She said those babies go back to where they came from and, because you're closest to the Creator, you're most perfect when you're so new in your life that they go back just perfect, and they wait there for you. That's what she told me. She said that she believed that that baby is going to come to her again in some way.

P: When I go see elders – I told the story to an elder lady too. She said to me, “God or the Creator has put you on this earth and you had to go through this suffering. The loss of this baby is going to make you stronger. It’s going to give you strength and it’s going to give you something that not too many people get in this world.” I said, “But why,” always that ‘why me, hey?’ always feeling sorry for myself. She said, “Because, you’re going to get something. From the loss of your child you’re going to get something.” She never told me what I was going to get, because I was always looking for some gift – something great for that. Then I realized now I’ve got it. I’ve got the gift. That’s why I do the work today. That’s my gift. My gift is to help. I know I’m resilient. Like I said, I can be proud now. Like I said, I was a wounded warrior, and now I’m not.

M: Are you just a warrior now?

P: Oh yes. I’m a fighting warrior now. Children always come first. I don’t know them, but I know they are there, and I know I’ll do everything I can to make their worlds a little bit better. I’m in a position to that, because I didn’t know I was going to get this far in my career. I didn’t. I didn’t know that. I thought I was always going to do frontline work and that I was never going to be in a position to change policy. But now I can talk to the grand Chief himself and tell him how it is. And I do. There’s changes because of that.

M: You’re a pioneer.

P: I guess I’m a pioneer, just like my mom, all over again. I had an opportunity to talk to him a few times and tell him the way it is. I said, “You know what, in we were so proud back in the 1970’s and 1980’s when we took over . We were so proud because we were going to change the system. There was going to be no more adoptions, there was going to be no more children in care, and so on. I tell you, we’ve done worse today than ever. We’ve got more children in care, and lost more children through the foster care system. We are making psychopaths out of our children. Ten years down the road the children that I have, unless I do something, are going to be walking around in the penitentiary or sitting in the jails. I don’t want to be a contributing factor to their lives. I want to be a positive. That’s why I need you to come work for me.” I can do things now. But yeah, we’ve done a terrible injustice to our children. What we have become is a typical . An old lady told me here, not too long ago, I met her and I was talking to her, “P, is there any more residential schools?” I said, “You know what, I think there’s one out in ” I was trying to be smart. “Sure there is,” she said, “You know what they are called?” I said, “What?” She said, “ , that’s what they’re called today. We’re no different.” I said to myself, “She’s so right.”

M: That’s how she sees it, hey?

P: That’s how she sees it. But you know what it’s discouraged. I’m thinking, holy cow, should I be sitting here? Should we be doing something? That’s when I started working on ‘P’ and saying to him, “Listen here buddy, let’s change the system. It’s not working for us.” We had a system a long time ago, I said, “How come we can’t go back to that?”

Our elders are dying and we need to go back and talk to them and ask what we used to do when children were orphaned and sexually abused?" We had people in the community look after them. We had surrogate families. We had extended families. But that's what we did, but we don't do that anymore. Now we put them in a whole different culture. Then they have to go back to poverty again, these poor little kids, after we give them their Nintendo 64, buy them bikes, they have their own bedrooms. We do that to them and then they have to go back to 15 or 20 people living in their homes. That's what they have to go back to. If I was a kid, I wouldn't want to go back home, I'd want to stay in care until I'm age 18. So I'd want to behave in all kinds of ways so that you guys don't care, and I'll run away once and awhile to go see my mom and dad.

M: So do you think there's anything else important that I should know about your resiliency?

P: I always tell people, "You don't know me." Because I'm a very open and kind person, that's what you see. But you don't me. Believe in something and make it happen.

M: That you're determined.

P: Oh determined, and you don't know me. I may seem nice, but I'm not nice. If I want something really, really bad, I'll fight for it.

M: You'll be like the mother bear.

P: Yes. You don't know me. That's what I always tell , you guys don't know me. You think I'm just a little woman sitting here doing my work every day. I don't know if that's what you're talking about, resiliency. I think not too much can get me now. I hope I answered your questions.

M: You did.

Appendix F

Interview with J

M: Could you tell me just a little bit about your life, how you got to be in this position that you are in today?

J: The job position?

M: Where you're at.

J: Where I'm at. Okay. I grew up in a small town. Education was not discussed, especially after grade 12. Even as a girl I was not expected to do anything, but I finished school and I decided to go into post-secondary because I'm a rebel. Not because I liked learning, not because of any of that, but because I'm a rebel and I wanted to do something different. I guess there was a part of me that probably wanted to run away from the small town kind of thing. So I came in thinking I would go into – I took grade 12 over again because Ontario grade 12 isn't good enough. I learned so much at the University of , and I did really well in Math because of one teacher who made things relevant to me, I guess. So I decided to go into Accounting and fix up the Band Books, because we're always getting criticized that our accounting is really crappy. Until I found out that not only do they not teach that here, or nothing even closely resembling that, that could give me the skills or information to do that job, I also found out that most of the accountants are not members of the community that are responsible for all this mismanagement. So I was linked with that goal. Actually I was in psychology. I majored in psychology and created a lot of problems because of course I was psychoanalyzing my entire family and they didn't like it.

How I got here . . . I think the rebel in me was a big part of it. I think that I wanted to do better than anyone around me. I wasn't happy with just working in the kitchen all my life and sitting home and raising kids. It just wasn't me. I wanted something different.

M: Were you always that way?

J: I don't know. I was always different, I know that. But no, I think most of my life that was just the way it was. That was what was expected of everybody. For me to say, "No, I want to do something different. I don't want to just get married and . . ." I had a good job working in the , and that was an achievement. Everyone thought that was an achievement because it was good money. I think it was probably my foster father who just kept pushing me saying, "Go on, go on to school. Keep doing more, you're a smart girl. You're the only person in your family that really graduated on time, never failing or skipping. You should continue on." So I thought that I'd try it. After that, everything was – not fluke – everything kind of came in my path as I needed it.

After , and going into , I graduated from that and did some work with the . really opened my eyes on a lot of things. I find it very similar to Native studies, where as you get awareness and learn things that you never were taught before. That was the same for woman studies, I found a parallel. I started working into that area, but bringing in issues. Then I got this job as the . So then I went on and did studies with – cause

of F always pushing me – guidance counselling because that was the skill I was missing. I was constantly always responding to the needs I thought were around me. I enjoyed my job, but I thought I could be a better , so I did . Then I decided I didn't want to spend my time , I wanted to create a that didn't require . So then I went into to get this position in the offices.

M: So how long have you been working here at this office?

J: Eleven years.

M: It's really come a long way in the eleven years that you've been here. It's changed and evolved a lot.

J: From when I used to have an office borrowed out of – one little office. Then I just went from hiring part-time students and getting little pieces of money to do that, and then we just outgrew it. Then we got this centre four years ago.

M: Well that's great hey?

J: Oh yeah. The successfulness of all that has been really good. I don't know if it's just the timing. Part of it is my push and I've been fairly persistent and bugging and bugging and bugging, as the would say, in his face. But a lot of it is just the timeliness. Just a lot of students and a lot of students saying, "No, we're not happy with this. We want more. We deserve more."

M: Well that's great.

J: Other than that, I think it's a fluke.

M: Sort of like everything else as it unfolds eh?

J: Yeah. I just find myself in a certain place, and either I like it or I don't like it. If I do, then you get what you need to be successful. I've always wanted – I don't know if that's a cultural trait or not, but I know you don't get a lot of pats on the back for doing well. In the communities it's sort of like you're expected to do well. It's when you screw up that you hear about it. So for me, I always had to do really, really well. I always had to prove myself, I had to justify my moving away.

M: Then it meant something.

J: Yeah. Coming to school meant something, and I'm helping the community even though I'm not living there.

M: So in all of that, what would you say was the hardest thing that you had to overcome? What was the most difficult challenge for you?

J: Out of my whole life, or just . . . ?

M: Out of your whole life.

J: In my whole life?

M: Something that could have maybe thrown you off track or . . .

J: Oh, there's been a few hardships. *****, my father passing away – that was hard, that was through graduate school – abusive relationship. But I'd say the hardest is what I'm going through right now, and that could be because it's recent too. It was a sexual assault of my daughter.

M: Oh no.

J: That threw me for a loop. That was probably . . . I was in at a conference when I got the phone call.

M: From her?

J: Actually no, she was staying at her friend's house and she told her friend. Her friend happens to be a guidance counsellor at School, and knew how to handle it and took her to the hospital and got her examined, and got her the . She did all the right things. Then I just had some people there that took care – you just want to numb them. They got me on an early plane and got me here and someone was there waiting and drove me to the to meet her because she had to go through her examination. They waited until I got there.

M: That must have been devastating hey?

J: It was the worst thing I could think of. But like I said, twenty years from now – because I know the death was really bad too, but at least he was older and we had time to prepare for it. This was my baby girl and she was only . That has got to be the hardest.

M: So when you find yourself in really tough times, how do you usually handle that?

J: I tend to withdraw first. I get really depressed and kind of go into my own little world, if you will. I remember when this happened to my daughter, I felt like I was in a bubble for about three weeks to a month – literally like a bubble. I would be driving to the store and it was like I was the only one that existed. Everybody else was like just make-believe, just walking around but not really part of it. They had no idea what was happening or how cruel everything was. After that, there were lots of people that came over, like F. The whole crew around here – students, staff, and family came over. It

was much like a mourning around the house and they just took care of us. They made sure we had food, circles, ceremonies, we had everything. But now when I look back I don't remember all of it. I know it happened and I know it was important for me to have that there, because I was dealing with it yet, and my daughter needed support. All of her aunties came out from her Moon Ceremony. All those ones that were there came out and spent time with her and talked with her, and hugged her. That made me feel that I could be a little bit more – deal with what I had to deal with so that I could be strong enough to support her. They were supporting me and yet they were supporting her, but it was very separate almost for the first little while, then it was circles together. But it was my friends that really came through. I don't know what I would have done. I think I probably – I just hugged her and couldn't stop crying. Then the next minute all I wanted to do was – I was casing out the joint. I knew where he lived, I knew his name, I knew which school he went to. I found out what he looked like and I literally stayed there hours and hours at his house waiting for him to come out. Cause I wanted to kill the son of a bitch. So then having to deal with that too. That's still not totally dealt with. I still want to kill him. Everything else seems to be moving. We moved homes and school, and she changed her name and I'll probably be changing my name to support that.

M: First and last name?

J: Yeah. Because he's a well-known drug dealer and gang member in . We had to move out of the school district and there's still people that know each other, and the kids at that age they're not very supportive of stuff like that. So they were pretty cruel to her. So she wanted to have a fresh start. She wanted to have a normal teenagehood – not always being the one that was raped or the one that had sex. You know like how they interpret in their eyes. So she didn't want to move to the new school with that identity.

M: I don't blame her.

J: I found it really interesting though. I talked to lots of people cause I thought that that was a big step, changing somebody's name, you know. But I found Aboriginal people very supportive. But with the non-Aboriginal family and friends, they thought that was a little extreme, "Don't you think you're running from the situation. She doesn't need to do that, she's giving him all the power." You know, that kind of interpretation.

M: She wanted distance. She wanted to separate herself from that. If that's what she needs . . .

J: If that's what it takes, because this new person, Z, isn't a victim. She's strong.

M: Have you ever read, "Yesterday I Cried."

J: No.

M: You should read it. It was written by an older woman who went through a lot of hardship in her life and she changed her name. Her last name is Vanzant, that's her new name. It's a good read.

J: Oh, right on. I'm always looking for stuff for her.

M: I think she changed her name for a lot of the same reasons. She wanted to be someone who was strong and independent, and not attached to any kind of victimization or pain, and separated herself. In the book she refers to herself by her old name, I think, which was Rhonda, and talks about that part of her life as being very distinct and separate and different from where she is at now.

J: And that was a good thing?

M: Yeah, I think it's a good thing.

J: Okay, yeah, cause that's what we're still struggling with. When you go to FASA (Family's Affected by Sexual Assault), and the two things I noticed out of there was, 1. They couldn't get over the fact that she changed her name. They thought that was kind of extreme, and is it a good thing to have two separate identities. They qualm over that. Because she'll never forget it. It's not like it will not be a part of her. But if she can separate the negative stuff off into that personality, maybe . . . We're still discussing that.

M: You know, it might be for awhile that she decides to change her name and be called something different, because she's young. She's only twelve. Maybe later in life she might want to reclaim her name back when she's able to integrate that experience.

J: That's a good point.

M: That woman, I think she changed her name as an adult, but still . . . her reasons for doing it, I thought were good.

J: That's interesting. Yeah, cause we went through a lot. I don't know why she chose Z. I think she's always thought of that as an "innocence" kind of name.

M: It is.

J: And then we changed our last names, or we will be – we have to wait until after the court case. It's going to be "Y" for all those reasons.

M: So there's softness mixed in with a little bit of veracity.

J: It's a new start.

M: So that's really symbolic.

J: Oh yeah. There's a lot of symbolism that went into it. Even like I said, I changed my name to accommodate her because everyone wants to know "why is your mom's name different?" It was so hard to change it from X to Z. But they want to know, "Why is your mom's name Q? Why aren't you the same name as your dad's name, Y?" It creates a little distress for her. So I said, "Okay, then we'll just change it for everybody." The first name I switched to was J, which is a goddess, but it's a goddess like a mother figure and that extreme anger. We did lots of research on it.

M: Isn't that neat though, hey? You wouldn't normally have the opportunity to pick what you're called.

J: And I think that's a good idea. We always say that about religion. Kids are raised in religions, but you don't give everyone choices and then as an adult decide who you are. When I was a kid I would have loved to do that. For some reason we're not allowed to do that. But we are.

M: That's good. It's certainly a way of coping with what happened.

J: It's helped her tremendously. She used to come to me and we were discussing it all summer and we were just emotional. To her this was the ultimate thing she could do. When she found out she got to change her name and was enrolled in school as ZY an she was just happy. She went in there positive and bright, and she made lots of friends right away.

M: Good for her.

J: It was probably the best thing we did.

M: That's good. So you guys are settled now into your new home.

J: Yeah. Filled into the new home. Other than last night she had a flashback. They're getting less and less, but still, she was upset last night. But it was because she was in the bathroom and taking a bath and she realized that the bathroom is the exact same physical setup as the bathroom that this guy took her into when he raped her. She said it was dark in there so I didn't know right away. I guess she pushed it out, she forgot about it. I guess as she was laying there last night she thought, "God, this is exactly the same." I thought, "Gees, you couldn't have thought of that before we bought it." So I don't know what I'm going to do about that. We'll see how much of a trigger it is; like if it needs to change or if it's something she can work on.

M: So that's a situation that you really couldn't change, that your daughter had. What do you do in situations that you can change?

J: That you can?

M: Yeah, like if you ran across a circumstance – I'm sure you do here a lot, like a situation you can change – how do you usually handle that?

J: I'm not sure what example I could give from here.

M: Well actually, even talking about your daughter, you did change a lot of things. Even though that was a circumstance that you couldn't reverse.

J: Yeah, but what I could change was anything I could. We put the house up for sale, we moved, we got some place in a totally different school district. We told the realtor, "As long as it's a different school district." What else, oh yeah, the name change.

M: So do you find that you're kind of active like that when stuff comes up that you think, "Well, what can be done here?"

J: Oh yeah. I'm action oriented. I would prefer if I can do something, and I would do anything and everything that could help or perceive to be helpful. I'm not someone that will sit back and just wallow for a long time. I'll do that for a certain point, but then . . . Usually in ceremony, this is when it comes out because you have – yeah I'm sharing my pain, but then also around the room is other pain. So you kind of sit there and think, "I'm not alone. There's pain here. What do I do after the circle's done." The pain doesn't go away so it forces you to take that next step. Like the smudge, you take away all the negative energy and stuff, so you physically, mentally, and psychologically take all that away so it leaves you with – you're not stuck there anymore. Then where do you go from there. So I don't know, there's a lot of symbolic things that facilitate taking action.

M: So do you find that really helpful having a spiritual life?

J: I do personally. Not everybody does, but I think that the symbolism behind it – like I find that even people who aren't traditional or cultural, that the values and the teachings that are shared, even outside of the spiritual component, are very wise and help facilitate that. For me, it's very much together and I see it helpful, but I don't find it helpful only to spiritual or cultural people. Does that make sense?

M: I think so. There's wisdom in that.

J: There's a lot of wisdom in the teachings; lot's and lot's of wisdom, and you don't need to put or contextualize it in a spiritual setting to make it useful.

M: Okay, I know what you're saying. But, and you found that helpful?

J: Mm hmm. I found it very helpful. In a lot of different situations. I remember losing a child in the 2nd month and I got a teaching around that.

M: What was the teaching?

J: The teaching was from an old woman out in Saskatchewan, and she said that children are always special to us in our culture, because of the closeness to Creator; they come straight from creator. So they are the newest. The one that is the closest to Creator; the one who has been away from him the least amount of time – I don't know if I can do it justice, I can't do elder speak. She talked about that and she said when women get pregnant, it's the Creator saying, "Here's a little gift for you." But the gift is not yours until you feel the movement of that child. Like usually around the fourth or fifth month you start feeling the baby move. Until that point in time, the gift is still part of Creator, it's still attached. The umbilical cord, if you will, is still with the Creator, and the Creator if he/she or you, feel it's not the right time – like something were to happen, if you miscarry or abortion – we have medicines for that too right – then that umbilical cord goes right back, and the gift is still intact, but it is with Creator until such a time that you are willing or able to carry that child or somebody else. But until you feel that movement, that is the umbilical cord from Creator pulling, and it's connected to you now.

M: That's wonderful.

J: Because, it was so hard losing. I know there's a lot of young women here who have gone through abortions for various reasons, and I always share that now. It has nothing to do with spirituality, this is what the old people have always said. When I heard that I felt so wonderful. I may have lost a child, but the child went back to Creator, it wasn't lost or dead or anything like that where you had loss ceremonies for it. It was still connected. It was just an automatic back. All I had to do was acknowledge the Creator to hold on to that child and I will take him in a year or two or pass him on to someone who has the time and ability to raise them.

M: Is that ever wonderful.

J: I thought so. So that's what I mean by the teachings and stuff. That was something that could have really been a hard time, but I don't find it difficult. I know a lot of women who still really mourn the loss of a child like that. I was crying and upset, it was still a loss. But after about a week and I heard that teaching, I just – I had a small feast and I was perfectly okay. I think every once and awhile, and wonder if – the baby would have been born in October and this and that. Other than that it's just warm feelings.

M: That's nice. I had the same experience.

J: Oh really.

M: Yeah, I miscarried at two months, but I got so sick. I was in and out of the hospital a couple of times and it was just the worst experience of my life for sure. But, I lost about a year of school over it. I really just bottomed out completely. Hearing that is even helpful for me now.

J: Well good. Yeah, cause that child is still waiting for you.

M: Yeah that's good, that's good to know. It's something positive. At the time I certainly didn't think of it that way, I thought, you know, death, gone, and vacancy and all sorts of things that were attached to that.

J: Not until the fourth or in between four and five months – that exact same baby will come back.

M: That's neat. That's good to know. I'm going to share that with other people that I know too.

J: I find it very helpful. I've used it a lot since that.

M: That's good. So what do you think has been the most helpful in coping with life stresses? I know you mentioned having your friends around with your daughter, was really helpful.

J: For me, I find that helps, like talking about it. I need to talk about it so that I can rationalize and make sense in my mind, or listening to other people's stories so I don't feel so alone. A lot of times when something bad happens you think, "Why me? What have I done? I've tried so hard to be a good person, to always give to people. I don't deserve this. Did I do something bad?" That's my typical response. So hearing other people and other really good people experiencing bad things sometimes is helpful. What I've also been able to put together is by talking about it, it's helpful to other people. I've often found, and usually in short periods of time for myself, things that have happened to me and I'll sit there thinking, "Why, why, why?" I'll talk about it to myself. I find that that experience becomes very handy within a very short time. I will have no doubt that somebody will come in to this office; whether it be a student, family, friend or somebody, will come in within the next year and have a similar experience as my daughter went through, and they will come in here looking for help not knowing what to do, and I will, if nothing else, say, "Yeah, I know how that feels." I find that's happened a lot in my life, even the really traumatic stuff. I told my daughter that too. She an artist and what I've been told about artists is that they sometimes have very traumatic moments in their life – they experience hard things – it's not a payment, it's what happens when you have a lot of skill because it facilitates that skill. That art is going to help other people, but she has to get in touch with certain things. So these life lessons come in. Right now it's hard to see it like that, but there will be a time in her life where she can thank Creator for this experience because it will either help her with her skill or ability, or it will help other people. She will recognize it for such, and of course she's

sitting there going, "Yeah right, I'd rather not have it." Yeah, you don't want it at the time, but there will be a point in time where . . . Like even, that was the hardest thing for me when I had to not only forgive but thank my ex for being abusive. Not saying it was okay, but I had to thank him for the lessons it taught me and the strength it gave me to leave and to do whatever I had to, and to be able to identify abusive behaviour. For some reason I needed to learn that.

M: So you take your experiences and you use them later in life?

J: Oh yeah.

M: Those are integrated into you.

J: Because to me those are life lessons and if you don't learn from your experiences – good and bad – they will repeat themselves.

M: But I guess that's happened for you enough times that you would be able to recognize that maybe for your daughter, because she's so young.

J: Yeah, really feeling like she got the short end of the stick, and 'why me of all people?'

M: So does she understand it that way, do you think?

J: Not yet, I don't think. I think she still is just really hurt that it happened and really angry, really, really angry at that point. She hasn't been able to get to a situation where she can say, "Well, maybe this experience will help me later in life or help somebody else later in life." She's not there yet.

M: Well, maybe when it comes up later in life she'll recognize that.

J: I mean, this kid's been accused of raping a few young girls already, so she's not the only one. If he goes to jail or gets help, then maybe she'll see that maybe that stopped him from doing that to somebody else. But right now she's still very individual-focussed, which is okay. That's just the age she's at too.

M: So what do you think had the most positive effect on your life?

J: The most positive effect.

M: Yep.

J: I think the ability to do this job, when I was offered this job the first time, because I was so insecure with myself. I was feeling undeserving, if you will. Here I finished my degree, did some volunteer work, and then they gave me this job, and I started.

M: Were you all alone when you got this job? Was there anybody else here?

J: Well, I was still with my ex then and things were getting pretty rough by then. Z – X then – was maybe 9 months. She was just young yet.

M: Do you have other children?

J: No.

M: So she's your only daughter.

J: She's the only one. Then of course there's the one that I lost last January.

M: So you've gone through a lot in recent times, hey?

J: Yeah. I've found this past year has been really, really rough. Which is probably why F sent you to me.

M: When I was giving my proposal he said, "I know somebody, I know somebody you can talk to."

J: F and I have been really close since we've met – well him and his wife. Whenever I have any kind of gathering or rough things happen to either of us, we're just right there. I've been out to his place and we've been out with him and his wife for a few drinks and dinner. He's been to my place. When this happened, boom, both of them were right there.

M: That's nice, hey?

J: Yeah.

M: To have friends show up when you need them.

J: And I know it wasn't an easy time for them either. It was interesting to see who showed up. That's the hard time right, it's easy to be friends when everyone's happy. It's difficult to be friends when somebody is in a lot of pain.

M: That's true.

J: I really took a look at who was around, and who was in my home that first few days. F and his wife were there.

M: Some people have said – resilient people – that they've had one person in their life from the time they were little sort of supporting them, or significant other, have you found that to be your experience?

J: No. I've had different people for different aspects – like education – my foster father, he was the one. He was the reason, the support and the only person that was really pushing me to continue when things got rough and I wanted to quit. Everyone was like, "Sure, come on back." I'm very fortunate, I have probably about a dozen really close friends that I can tell anything. I can call them at any time of the night if I'm having a hard time, and they're perfectly okay with that. Very few people have that. Usually you have one or two. I couldn't say that. I have many.

M: That's great.

J: Yeah, I'm very, very blessed that way.

M: So you've got a strong social network.

J: Mm hmm. My friends in the city, cause I don't have family here, are my family in so many ways. I can see the roles that they take on in different things.

M: Well that's good. What advice would you give to a young person who comes in that has the same kinds of struggles, or is just struggling and is maybe lost in life?

J: Lost in life?

M: Yeah, maybe a student comes in here and says something like, "I know I should maybe get education for myself or something, but I'm just hurting, lost . . ."

J: I guess we'd probably just spend some time talking about the situation revolving around the feeling of being lost. I know for a lot of students, loss is usually around identity – like not knowing who we are as Aboriginal people. But I'd be very cautious around . . . I don't want to offer that. A lot of people are very afraid of that or very much think they know themselves when in fact they don't. If I can say that bluntly. Cause we've been raised in such a way that that part of us – like we know we're Indian, but yet we're not allowed to talk about that, we're not allowed to learn anything about that, we're not allowed to be there. We're supposed to be like everybody else, but you may come from a reserve or you may look different, or whatever. I think it has a much bigger bearing on our lives than that. I think that being an Aboriginal person in university, or being an Aboriginal person in the city is different. If you don't have that strength and that knowledge to know that, regardless of how you place yourself or contextualize that, you still need to know yourself as an Indian person walking on this earth. If you have that then you can accomplish anything. Like the people I've talked to that come in with that really strong self-awareness and self-confidence, yeah they have problems and things happen, but they just go through life and they finish no problem. They come in and talk every once and awhile, but they have that advice. It's the students that don't have that, it seems every little thing makes them think, "Oh, I've got to drop this course.

I can't find daycare for my child and that's it, I'm going to go back." Those little things kind of become huge.

M: The obstacles.

J: Yeah. It's not really that because if you had all those other things, you can find daycare. There's students here that bring their children to class until such time that that can happen. The barriers aren't insurmountable anymore, but if all the other stuff isn't dealt with then they can become heavy. Because there's always that little piece of you that thinks, "I don't deserve to be here. I'm not smart enough to be here. You must have made a mistake on my application form." Whatever. That's what that's coming from. You're always looking for a reason to go back. You don't want to go back as a failure. It's very rarely people leave for academic reasons. It's not they can't handle the work or they can't pass the courses, it's everything else. They can't find daycare, there's too much racism, I miss my family.

M: Those kinds of things. Then other students are able to just sort of do what needs to get done and move through whatever program they are in.

J: That's the only common thing I've been able to identify in the eleven years I've been here. There may be others, but for me that's the most consistent factor I've found in students that succeed versus students that give up.

M: Identity.

J: Identity.

M: I think that's important because if you know who you are and you know who you're about, you've got a really strong foundation.

J: All your forefathers, all that experience, all the stuff you got at the Treaty's and the reserves and the 60's *****, the residential school, that's resiliency. If you know all that and you're still here, not only do you come in with a much more positive attitude about who you are at university, you've got skills, knowledge, and all these positive things bracing you versus the kind of identity that's given now. You're sitting here, "You're an Indian, you must be a mistake. You're too stupid to be here. You don't have Math and English skills. You don't have this, you don't have that."

M: It's unstable.

J: It's too easy to believe it when you're faced with barriers if you don't have the other half.

M: Yeah, I would think so. That makes sense.

J: I don't necessarily mean spiritual. A lot of times people think Indian – our identity and all that with the feathers and the sage and all that. That's just one way of practicing it. It's not what I'm talking about. It's something much bigger and broader and more general than that. Cause you can have a strong Indian identity and practice Catholicism. You know, that part. A lot of people get that mixed up.

M: Do you think that awareness is new?

J: That awareness?

M: Yeah, that awareness that being Indian doesn't mean that you go to the sweats or . . .

J: Yeah, I think it's very new because when the Indian became cool again, or became popular, that's what it was about. It was the only thing we knew because we're trying to relearn our culture from a colonized viewpoint. In fact, the English language or the English way of doing things is very noun-based – you go around and you do the things that make you white, or you do the things that make you black, or you do the things that make you Indian. But it's different. We're talking about verb-based culture – a very action oriented and the relationship you have between you and Mother Earth, and the relationship you have between you and your mother, the relationship you have between you and the building or the institution. That's what makes the person Indian. Indian and whites and black is very much a state of mind. It has nothing to do with how you practice. The relationship is more important than the act or the thing.

M: Or the symbols. So do you think you're resilient?

J: God, yeah. Especially after this talk. Holy.

M: That's great, because you know what I find. I've talked to a lot of men and they'll be the first to say, "For sure I'm resilient. Listen to my story, what I've just told you." A lot of women will say, "No." I don't know why that is. But I'm glad that you said yes. That's good. I think it's important to recognize your strength and to be okay with saying, "I'm a strong person."

J: I think too it depends on where you catch the person too. If you would have asked me back in when this was all new, I certainly didn't feel strong or resilient at that time. People have told me, "Wow, you're actually here and you're daughter's okay, and you did all these things. Wow that's good." It's the powerlessness or the helplessness that creates people who feel they are not resilient. That empowerment right. That's what we try to do with the students here, empower them, and patting people on the back when they do stuff. A lot of kids don't take credit for a lot of work they've done – even just moving from a reserve to the city is a big step. I was so scared my first day of school. If I didn't have somebody to walk me into class holding my hand, I wouldn't have went. They had to do that that first day.

M: It's a big change hey? So do you think there's anything else that's important that I should know about, your story?

J: I guess the biggest lesson I learned – and again this goes back to a teaching that was given to me – you're not here to question what Creator puts in front of you. The Creator will put in front of you only that which you can handle. If you can't handle it and you can't take it, He wouldn't give it to you. That took a lot to absolve. That goes for good and bad. Creator gave me this job. It's a lot of responsibility. It's a very safe job. There's pretty good money and there's a lot of guilt around that. It's like, "Who am I as an Indian person . . ." I have a nice office with a window. I drive a nice vehicle. There's guilt. I carry a cell phone. That is a lot. That was hard for me. Yeah, cause a cell phone to me was very "white," and I didn't deserve that, I didn't need that. So I had to spend a lot of time in the Regis and keep myself humble and all that.

M: Here's those doubts again coming.

J: We have a hard time accepting success, really a hard time. We really need to separate and still be humble. It's not just me, there's a reason why Creator's put me here. I obviously have earned it. I was obviously put there for a reason. Any good thing or any bad thing that happens to me, it's for a reason, and it's because I can handle it, or because I'm supposed to do something for it. It's just not right for me. I can't just take this and say, "This is because of me." I have a responsibility to help other students. That's what this job is about. That's why I'm here. As soon as I lose that, I won't be here anymore. That goes with the bad. He wouldn't have given it to me if there wasn't a reason and if he didn't think I could handle it. That's the one thing I think we all need to know.

M: Yeah, I guess it helps with facing hard circumstances.

J: It's helps you force out saying, "Why then? Why would this terrible thing happen to me? There's got to be a reason. Then to say, what positive thing can I take out of this horrible mess that will make me a better person because of it? Because that's the lesson I'm supposed to learn from that." That's what we spend a lot of time talking about and trying to figure out.

M: It's good though.

J: It's a lot of work, but it does help.

M: Some time needs to go by, too, sometimes, to get clarification.

J: Like I said, back in , you wouldn't have had the same conversation.

M: Yeah, it was a difficult time. But I'm glad that you and your daughter moved, and . . .

J: Yeah, it was a struggle. Arguing, is it the right thing to do, are we running, are we being victims here? And then the other part is you do what you have to do to make her feel safe.

M: Yep. Well it's tricky right, because you can look at it both ways and you can say, "Yeah, physically I left." But the reasons for leaving were for your daughter and what she needed to happen. She's doing much better at school and is much happier for the decisions that you guys made. I think that's great.

J: I'm really happy. I was so worried that it would end up being a mistake. But so far so good.

M: Well that's good. So have you guys' officially decided that you're changing your names?

J: Oh yes, it's official. She's already registered. We just can't do it legally. Victim's Services are even going to pay for it – all the ID changes, everything – they're going to pay for it. So I thought that was good – I thought if they approved it then they thought it was a good thing. And I liked that. Right now the trial has been set for , so she would have to get up there and swear herself in, so if we change her name before that, then she'll swear in and he will find out what her new name is, and then she doesn't feel safe anymore. So we're going to keep her old name for the records until afterwards.

M: For legality. That makes sense.

J: The paperwork is done. All we have to do is submit it. Either he's got to plead guilty, or the trial is done. Then I can mail them. But the decision is made and everything is set.

M: Are you going to keep your first name?

J I'll keep it . . . like I'm going to be J-R - cause as an adult, and I've been here eleven years, it's hard for people to . . . Whereas Z was in a whole new school with all new . . . It's just two of her friends and all of her family that had to learn the new name. For me there is a lot of people out there that would have to learn that. But the last name will be a for sure, and the first name I'll be more lenient on. M, the one that came in for the keys, she changed her name. I don't know the reasons behind it, but she did. I'm glad. Not too many people have that choice to do that. I never thought of it like that. There's a part of me that thinks that I'm disrespecting the name my parents gave me. But why not, we choose our own religions, why not choose the way you want to be identified.

M: I think in this case where circumstances come up where she wants to be different and she's looking to you to support that.

J: Yeah, that's been really good. I've been really fortunate with that that she feels comfortable talking to me. Teenage years is so rough.

M: It's hard. I'm sure she'll get through it hey.

J: I hope so. I know so. She's already there, almost.

M: Well that's great. Well, I should get going.

J: You got everything you needed?

M: I've got everything that I need. Thank you very much.

Appendix G
Coding System

Data Codes

Code	Description	Example
CPA	Problem focused – active	I knew I had to....
CPM	Problem focused – meditative	I thought about what to do next.
CEE	Emotion focused – escapism	I wished I were somewhere else.
CEX	Emotion focused – existential	I knew that I was not alone
CEM	Emotion focused – minimization	I tried not to make a big deal out of it.
CEB	Emotion focused – self blame	I shouldn't have....
CEN	Emotion focused – negotiation	I tried to make a deal to change the situation.
ES	Emotion focused – social	Talking to someone else helped.
ESC	Emotionally secure	I know where I am at and I feel okay.
SA	Spiritually focused – active	I consulted an elder.
SP	Spiritually focused – predetermined life	The creator has a plan for me.
SM	Spiritually focused – meditative	I prayed.
ESM	Existential focused – seeking meaning	I thought about why this happened to me
SOF	Social support – friend(s)	I called my friend.
SOS	Social support – spouse	My partner really helped me.
SOP	Social support – parent	My mom has always been there.
SOF	Social support – family	My family stands by me.
SF	Support – financial	I was able to get a loan
SA	Support – advise	I consulted with others.
SW	Support – wisdom	I was able to get advice from my grandfather.
CMS	Commitment to self	I knew what my goals were and I did what I had to achieve them.
CMO	Commitment to others	I try to use my life in a positive way to help others.
AW	Self awareness	I think about how these circumstances have effected me.
I+	Identity – strong	I know who I am
CH+	Change is normal and positive	I grew from this experience

EF	Effectual	I can usually accomplish what I set my mind to.
INT	Integrated	My hard times in life helped me grow as a person.
M	Mastery	I have gifts in a particular area and I am using them.
C	Control	I believe that I have some control over events or how I choose to react to them.
RES	Resources	I know that I will be able to get what I need to handle life situations
CMP	Comprehensibility	I can make sense out of life's events – including really hard times
MNG	Meaningfulness	My suffering in life has been worth the effort to get through – now I am stronger.
SAC	Self Acceptance	I am okay with who I am.
OEX	Open to experience	I feel good about trying different things
IND	Sense of individuality	I do things in my own unique way.
SAT	Self actualizing	I am realizing my potential.
FF	Fully functioning	I try to get the most out of life.
OMD	Open minded	I know that there are lots of different ways of looking at things.
FOR	Forgiving	Forgiving others has helped me let go of the past.
ACK	Acknowledge the contributions of others	A lot of people have helped me to achieve my goals
ATT	Attachment	I feel connected with others
SE	Self esteem	I feel good about myself
OPT	Optimism	I try to look for the positives in situations.
OBJ	Objective view of self	I knew I didn't have the skills so I got some more training.
PR	Personal Responsibility	I knew that it was a mistake and I accept my part in it.

Appendix E
Coding Synopsis

	INT 1	INT 2	INT 3	INT 4
COPING				
Problem Focused - Active	3	5	7	5
Problem Focused - Meditative	0	1	2	1
Emotion Focused - Escapism	0	1	0	0
Emotion Focused - Existential	0	1	0	0
Emotion Focused - Social	2	2	1	5
Spiritually Focused - Active	4	3	1	6
Spiritually Focused - Predetermined	1	3	2	2
Spiritually Focused - Meditative	1	0	1	1
Support - Friends	1	7	2	1
Support - Parents	5	2	2	0
Support - Family	3	0	2	1
Support - Financial	1	0	0	0
Support - Advice	0	1	1	1
Support - Wisdom	0	2	2	1
HARDINESS				
Commitment to Self	3	3	3	1
Commitment to Others	0	7	7	4
Effectual	5	6	4	1
Mastery	2	0	1	2
Control	2	1	1	1
Change normal/+ve	0	3	1	1
Acceptance of good and bad	1	1	0	8
COHERENCE				
Resources	4	3	2	1
Comprehensibility	3	8	3	6
Meaningfulness	3	3	0 (P)	2
PERSONALITY				
Cultural Identity	3	2	0	3
Strong Identity	2	4	3	3
Self Awareness	0(P)	3	3	4
Integrated	4	4	2	7
Self Acceptance	0	0	0	0
Creative/Effectual	P	P	P	?

Open to Experience	P	1	1	?
Sense of Individuality	P	3	0	0
Autonomous	P	P	P	?
Open Minded	P	1	1	?
Emotionally Secure	P	1	1	P
Open Minded	0	1	1	0
Forgiving	1	1	2	0
Attachment	3	7	1	3
Acknowledgement of Others	2	3	0	0
Self Esteem	2	0	0	0
Optimistic	1	2	3	3
Objective View of Self	1	1	2	2
Personal Responsibility	P	0	2	6
Seeking meaning - existential	0	3	0	0
Feeling Gratitude/Blessed	P	P	?	P
Respect	0	0		2
Determination	5	P	4	7

P – refers to process. Where P is indicated, this code was evident in the process of the interview.