

Spirit Menders: The Expression of Trauma in
Art Practices by Manitoba Aboriginal Women Artists

by

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Abstract

Historical trauma has affected the lives of all Aboriginal people in Canada. This thesis argues that Aboriginal art has the potential to contribute to recovery from trauma on an individual and a communal level but that its continued analysis through the Western gaze may take away from this restorative impact. The main purpose of this research is therefore to explore how historical trauma theory and the Aboriginal ethos can be viewed together to create a new hybridized lens through which to interpret Aboriginal art. This lens has been named the Spirit Mender Model. The thesis explains and illustrates how this model provides a useful Aboriginal lens through which to understand, interpret, and appreciate Aboriginal art in its restorative impacts.

For me it has been a constant battle since entering Art College in Calgary in 1962. Nothing has been handed to me on a silver platter, but I have drawn the energy from all this negativity and turned it into a positive force. The racism I have suffered has only focused me more on the battle against racism. It is one of the war shirts that I wear now. I know there is a purpose for me on this earth and I will make a difference.

To my fellow exhibitors: I am proud to exhibit my work with you and to know that even though your road will be rough that I will have helped to create some smooth patches for you as those artists I have listed on the blackboards have done for me and for us all.

To those people whose life is affected by racism, I say-as my father taught me-
“Just take a stand, just fight and never give in, never give into those bastards.”

Joane Cardinal Schubert Plains Cree (1989),
artist, curator, writer and storyteller.

Acknowledgements

I came across a teaching, and this teaching gave me knowledge about the universe. It said sky is where Eagles reside and ascend as messengers to the Creator. To me, the Eagles represent the artists in this thesis. I would like to thank Lita Fontaine, Raven Peters, Tiffany Seymour, Jackie Traverse, and Val T. Vint, for their participation in this study. I consider them art activists.

In this teaching, the Earth represents Grandmother Turtle and her wisdom. I would like to thank Pat Pedersen and Sylvana Rodrigue for their guidance and knowledge.

The East represents Spirit. I would like to acknowledge the spirit and patience of my family. I would also like to acknowledge my good friend Christina Keeper who understood.

The South represents the window of my soul, my emotions. I would like to thank Les Oliver for the light in my window and nurturance that accompanied the light.

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1. Introduction

1.1 A Brief Autobiography

One little, two little, three little Indians...this was part of my being, growing up in a reality filled with stereotypes surrounding me in my early years. I recall the capital letter "I" on a border above the chalk board and there, perched next to it, was a little Indian papoose, a North American Indian child. These experiences began during the 1960's and were the first of many forms of stereotyping and oppression that I encountered, including name-calling and the double-edged sword of racism, like being caught in the middle of not being white or Indian enough. Nevertheless, I survived the oppressive milieu and came out to be a rather decent human being. However, it was not easy.

During my early years, I had to repeat a grade due to my inability to communicate effectively. I had to go to speech therapy, which meant missing recesses - playtime for a child. English was my mother's second language and the pronunciation of my mother's first languages of Dakotah and Saulteaux permeated my proper speech phonetics of English. I also lost my singing voice in elementary school because I went out of key during a choir practice and the music teacher told me to leave. From there on, I did not involve myself further in choirs and even today struggle to sing our sacred songs in ceremonies. I will overcome it.

I struggled with writing as well and often wondered about it. I eventually understood my difficulty with writing as an intergenerational transmission from my mother (Dakotah). My mother went back to school to gain a diploma in social work, but

written English was a constant battle for her also. Her emotional struggle, I believe, was transmitted into my psyche as well. I came to think that my abilities were lacking and this attitude became a mantra during my childhood and continues to this day. So to break the frustration cycle of my mother and me, I am writing this thesis in honour of her and all mothers who successfully kept our heritage very much alive during our combat against colonialism.

My first recollection of art was in grade three. Even though the work I made was a flag of Nova Scotia, I felt proud. It was hung up in the hallway along with the works of kids of diverse backgrounds to commemorate Canada's Centennial year of 1967. It was a year of Canadian nationalism and little did I realize that my flag was a form of assimilation/acculturation that silently compelled me to conform me to the customary practices of colonialism.

As I reflect back on my childhood drawings, I realize that I was also drawing the history of my surroundings and my upbringing, shrouded in veils of historical trauma and the ways in which these traumas were being played out in the present. I chose art as a tool to assist me in gaining a voice to express my experiences of being colonized: in other words, as a tool of decolonization. Art was and is my way of releasing and expressing that which is inside me. In addition, having an Aboriginal way of knowing that I adopted from my mother, as she did from her mother and others in the matrilineal line, helped to make art make sense for me.

My experiences of trauma began to appear in my early years having seen my parents struggle with the perils of alcohol abuse and my dad beating on my mom. To

help me cope with my surroundings I would go hide and begin drawing because the act itself took me to another place of peace and solitude. From my previous experiences of being good in art at school, drawing became a substitute for my yearning for my parents' affections.

My parents did not have the time to sit down and provide their children with cognitive nurturance. My parents had to work because there were nine children in my family and providing for us physically was the priority. Beside their preoccupation with providing for the family, they were primarily silent around the home. They did not have the time or inclination to share stories; I was only to receive fragments of their stories. I think this was one of the effects of their residential school experience and the impact of their experiences on the next generation. On the few occasions when they would tell me stories, anger would creep into the conversation and it would cease. My parents did not want to share their "ugly past" as they frequently mentioned. Métis Scholar, Jo-Ann Episkenew, notes in her book *Taking Back Our Spirits: Indigenous Literature, Public Policy, and Healing* that silence "leads to isolation, causing many Indigenous people to suppress their feelings, believing that they are alone in their experiences and responses. The effects of emotional repression on emotional and spiritual health are long lasting" (16).

At the same time as I was being verbally silenced, art helped me to cope and begin mending. My use of art for coping as well as expressing myself, has continued into my adult years. Creating art transformed the negative into a positive as curator Cathy Mattes pointed out about my work.

(Leah) Fontaine sights (sic) residential school as one of the causes for the lost connection with nature, as well as technological progress. In the mixed media series Elements (2004), she digitally merges photographs taken from a “ceremonial environment” with imagery from nature to represent the four elements. She ironically utilizes computer technology, something that has removed us from nature, to reconnect with land and spirit (Mattes. “Aboriginal Artists,” 30 - 31).

I grew up and continue to live in two worlds, the Western and Aboriginal. The development of my imagination has been doubly challenged because I had to make sense of them both. My desire to acquire knowledge became as big as an ocean, as I wanted to know both worlds to attain balance in an unbalanced society. Thus, I became a lifelong student in both the artistic and academic worlds.

My location poses some challenges. First, I am tri-cultural. That is, I am an Métis/Dakota/Anishinaabe Ikwe. While all three aspects of my heritage have influenced me, particularly in childhood, my preferred lens is Anishinaabe (Ojibwe). By choice, I participate in more Anishinaabe ceremonies than any other – they seem to speak most directly to my spirit. My lens is how I view my world – what I see as well as how I interpret what I see, and the meaning or relevance it has in my life. My Anishinaabe spirituality defines my personhood. Anishinaabe ceremonies create healing modalities that affected my art practices while adding to my Aboriginal lens. The following quote by Dr. Basil Johnston, Anishinaabe, embodies the philosophical principles I also carry with regards to truth:

When an “Anishinaubae’ says that someone is telling the truth, he says ‘w’daeb-awae’. It is at the same time a philosophical proposition that, in saying, a speaker casts his words and his voice only as far as his vocabulary and his perception will enable him. In so doing the tribe was denying that there was an absolute truth, that the best a speaker could achieve and a listener expect was the highest degree of accuracy. Somehow the one expression ‘w’daeb-awae’ sets the limits of a single statement as well as setting limits of all speech.

(Johnston 101).

In other words, my truth is not “Aboriginal.” While I try to reflect an Anishinaabe worldview, there are other Aboriginal nations, which see truth from their own perspectives. What I mean is that likely there is no *one* Aboriginal truth that covers the diverse nations.

The second challenge I face due to my location is that I frequently question the majority of Western analyses of Aboriginal fine art as these analyses of our art seems to be missing knowledge of the respective Aboriginal history, culture, and creative processes. Therefore, they seem to be evaluating from a potentially misinformed perspective. (Young Man)

The third challenge I face is that I am creating a narrative that discusses traumatic events experienced by Aboriginal people, which I believe many Euro-Canadians, as well as members of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit do not want to recognize or acknowledge, let alone discuss. For some it is just too personal and painful to discuss this in a public

forum. I am a believer in diplomacy and a believer that restoration must come from all. My hope is that art viewed through a non-Western, mostly Anishinaabe lens will offer another bridge to help us to sit down to talk to our oppressors so that they may hear us.

My course work and readings in Native Studies and my personal passion for art contributed to the process that resulted in this thesis. That is, I became aware of the importance of Aboriginal people speaking for themselves. In particular, in the graduate course “Aboriginal Methodologies”, with Dr. Laara Fitznor, I was encouraged to pursue knowledge about Aboriginal people from an Aboriginal perspective. Decolonization does not only mean that we create our own art and literature about our experiences but that we are also in control of the interpretation of those creations. My interest in art as a vehicle for mending the spirit made me want to do a thesis exploring selected pieces of art by using an Anishinaabe lens that is more appropriate than the one more generally in use. My own history, and my knowledge of the personal histories of many of my friends, made me want to include trauma and restoration in this thesis. The artists I interviewed, five Manitoba Aboriginal women artists who in their own right are established professionals share with me common personal and professional experiences as well as the cultural geographical location of living in Manitoba.

1.2 Aboriginal Art

1.2 a Historical Overview

Although many believe there is no pre-contact definition of Aboriginal art, art did exist before colonization. As art historian, Lee Ann Martin (Mohawk), states, “We all know that art existed in Aboriginal communities historically, but it was framed,

integrated, and discussed in ways that differ greatly from Western categorizations. Contexts for art were, and are, those of the everyday and religious, of the celebratory and of the ceremonial” (Martin 106). What is called aesthetics today included values, traditions, beliefs and symbolism expressed in various physical forms and shapes that often depicting our origins and hi/stories that gave us our sense of belonging in this universe. Gerald McMaster (Plains Cree) and Cliff Trafzer (Wyandot), editors of the book *Native Universe: Voices of Indian America*, wrote that early Aboriginal people believed in the unseen powers and creative forces that formed creation and that governed such things as the changing seasons and other natural phenomena, and that art came from that place. We never analyzed, categorized, labeled, or anthropologically placed art in the presence of functionality. I believe art was an extension of our connection to the land transmuted through humans to create tools of survival. Once survival was assured, I believe art and its aesthetics were also used to decorate those tools, making them more valuable both to the owner and as trade items. With the arrival of European “civilization” and their understanding of art forms as written books and paintings on the wall, Indigenous artistic expressions that were integrated into everyday day life were not recognized as art. Instead, all aspects of Aboriginal ways of life were considered “savage” (Berkhofer, Jr. 55-61) and therefore became subject to aggressive changes.

In 1857, the pre-Confederation government passed a bill called the *Gradual Civilization Act*. It was a bill to encourage Aboriginal people to become enfranchised, meaning that they would be considered as “Enfranchised Indian.” Indians who became enfranchised lost all rights that had been granted to them by treaty and/or the Indian Act.

Enfranchisement meant they no longer had a voice in activities on their home reserve, which they were forced to leave. This was the first official policy of many that were reflective of colonialism,¹

as the Aboriginal people of Canada were slowly subjugated to the will of the Government of Canada.

The *Indian Act* of 1876 further reflects this kind of colonialist policy. It altered the lives of all Status Aboriginal Canadians and even affected the Métis as well, as Aboriginal and Métis People alike were caught in the process of oppressive policies with their own issues regarding the lack of human rights and rights to “own” land. The *Indian Act* oppressed and undermined many facets of Aboriginal infrastructures, culturally, politically, and socially. “Briefly, between 1876 and 1880, legislation even provided that an Indian who obtained a university degree or became a legal professional (including notary public) or minister of the Gospel automatically ceased to be Indian and was enfranchised as an ordinary citizen of Canada (Miller 168). Some Aboriginal Canadians of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit descent are still feeling the impact of these controlling, subjugating policies.

Regarding artistic practices, in 1884, the *Indian Act, Section 114*, was amended to adopt as its goal, the destruction of Aboriginal cultures. “The precedent for imposing

¹ According to the Oxford English Dictionary, Colonialism is defined as “the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting its economy.” (“Colonialism,” OED Online). Said asserts that colonialism is almost always a consequence of imperialism, “the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory” (“the practice, (*The World, The Text, and the Critic.*” 8).

controls over indigenous religious expression on the prairies had been set during the period between 1884 and 1895 when legislation was passed to outlaw ceremonial activities associated with potlatches among the Northwest Coast Indian (Pettipas 88). The amendment outlawed cultural expressions related to ceremonies and gatherings, which are intimately linked to art forms like dances, songs, regalia, masks, musical instruments. However, at that time money became more necessary for survival as it became increasingly difficult to hunt and trap because those activities required permission to leave the reserve. Besides the outlawing of ceremonies, the creation of the Indian Residential School system was intended as a further push toward assimilation including an unambiguous agenda of Christianization.

In 1846, the (Canadian) government resolved at a meeting in Orillia, Ontario, to fully commit itself to Indian residential schools. Thus, the interest of church and state merged in a marriage of convenience that was to endure more than a century; the churches could harvest souls at government-funded schools while meeting the shared mandate to eradicate all that was Indian in the Indian. The “Indian problem” would cease to exist (Fournier and Grey 53-54).

In 1894, an amendment was passed authorizing cabinet to “make regulations, which shall have the force of law, for the committal by justices or Indian agents of children of Indian blood under the age of sixteen years, to such industrial school or boarding school, there to be kept, cared for and educated for a period not extending beyond the time at which such children shall reach the age of eighteen years (Miller 129). This gave the Indian agent (and the police) the power to apprehend any children under

the age of 18, and send them to the residential schools. In 1920, Canada amended the *Indian Act, Section 10* again, making it mandatory for Aboriginal parents to send their children to Indian Residential School. “Every Indian child between the ages of seven and fifteen years of age who is physically able shall attend such day, industrial or boarding school as may be designated by Superintendent General for full periods during which school is open each year” (Milloy 71). Any parent who did not send their child was considered a criminal. The church and state assumed almost total control over Aboriginal children and youth, and anything they might create. McMaster wrote about art and craft and its commodification² in residential schools in an essay entitled, “Tenuous Lines of Descent: Indian Arts and Crafts of the Reservation Period”, published in the *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* (1989). He states:

During the 1920’s, the Department grew very active in organizing and supervising Indian exhibits at industrial and agricultural exhibitions, such as those in Brandon, Regina, Calgary, and Edmonton. This involved encouraging Indian students from industrial and residential schools to participate in the production of arts and crafts. One role of the Indian Affairs' agent (to ensure that these Indians were being "civilized," i.e., becoming good farmers and tradesmen), was to exhibit their

² The Oxford English Dictionary defines Commodification as “the action of turning something into or treating something as a mere commodity” (“Commodification,” OED Online). While it may be argued that the original intention of the arts and crafts that students produced (prior to becoming students) was reflective of a spiritual force, or to honour a spiritual force, Kulchyski may argue that such commodification of the objects produced by the students was an early form of cultural appropriation (Kulchyski, 9).

products to show their civilized qualities rather than their traditions, assuming that this would instill a Euro-Canadian spirit of competitiveness and motivation.

Beneath the veneer, however, lay the chilling fact that the Indian was a showcase for the Department's policy of assimilation (McMaster, Tenuous 208-209).

Such commodification of Aboriginal students' art and artistic productions in the residential school makes me angry. I believe the bastardization of Aboriginal artistic talent in such a manner not only assisted in the commodification of the students' craft but also contributed to breaking their spirit. By showcasing items that were not rooted in and did not reflect their traditions, it seems that the students were being rewarded for any tendency they might exhibit in leaving behind their Aboriginal culture.

Another practice was the exploitation of students in Day School that uses a form of colonialism combined with nationalism. From 1932 to 1942, children of the Osoyoos Indian Band in British Columbia, attending the Inkameep Day School, were encouraged to make art. Anthony Walsh (Irish), a teacher at the school, believed that art "gave a rare insight into how these children lived their lives and saw their world, and into the ongoing national dialogue around the history of evolving ideas of Canadian identity and citizenship (Virtual Museum of Canada). The works of these children are considered important because they depict the imagination and history as seen by children who were in residential day schools.

While the art works of the children at Inkameep Day School seem to provide the exception that proves the rule, there is more to the story. The Canadian Red Cross used

the children's artwork in their magazine from 1942 through 1946, as well as for fundraising and building international goodwill:

In the case of the Inkameep Juniors, they performed their duties as good citizens by not only practicing their Health Rules, they raised money for the Red Cross for its humanitarian causes through the sale of their drawings and collection of donations at their dramatic play productions, and they promoted international goodwill by exchanging portfolios with other Juniors around the world. Archival records detail the exhibition of their work in the cities of Prague, Vienna, Paris, Dublin, Glasgow, London, and throughout North America (Walsh 14).

So, even though the children were allowed, for a 10 year period, to create their own art, the art itself was taken from them and used to further the cause of another organization, with little benefit going to the children or their families. The one notable benefit is that the children were allowed to express their experience through their art, rooted in their traditions. Further benefit of their work with the Red Cross is that they had the opportunity to exchanged art portfolios with other juniors around the world.

In 1951, the *Indian Act, Section 114*, was again amended to allow certain cultural expressions among Aboriginal nations in Canada. "A subsequent version of the Act as Bill 79 was passed in 1951 with all regulations dealing with potlatches, dances, giveaways, and the 'mutilation of flesh' being dropped" (Pettipas 209). Sweat lodges and Sun Dances were allowed again on the prairies. However, the art practices as part of those ceremonies were still ignored for their aesthetic value by the western art

establishment. It was only during the flourishing period of the so-called Woodland Style of art of the 1960's that Aboriginal artists found recognition.

In 1972, at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, there was a showing of three Aboriginal painters, Daphne Odjig, Alex Janvier and Jackson Beardy. It is believed by artist, Joe Sanchez, that "it was a seminal exhibition in the formation of Professional Native Art Inc" (Devine, "Witness" 21). As Professional Native Art Inc. grew to consist of Jackson Beardy, Eddy Cobiness, Alex Janvier, Norval Morriseau, Daphne Odjig, Carl Ray, and Joe Sanchez, the organization became more commonly known as the "Indian Group Of Seven," a term assigned to them by Gary Scherbain, (Scherbain) owner of the Wah-sah Gallery based in Winnipeg, Manitoba. These pioneers opened doors for future generations of what would come to be called the Woodland Style and to date Woodland Style art is still in demand.

Granted these artists drew attention to Aboriginal artistic expressions, including their oral traditions however, the Woodland Style or the Anishinaabe School of Art was promoted as *the* Canadian Aboriginal Art. Thus, the Woodland Style shaped the art patrons' ideas of what Aboriginal art should be, and the standard against which any other Aboriginal art would be judged and valued. The Woodland style, to some degree, continues to be viewed as "authentic" Aboriginal art, and that is problematic in that there are many contemporary First Nations artists who cannot show or sell their work because it is not recognized as 'authentic' enough as it does not follow the Woodland Style. For instance, my art was not accepted in a commercial art gallery located in Winnipeg, Manitoba because it was "too conceptual." That is, my art is not stylized in the demands,

needs and wants of the Euro-Canadian patrons and art market. In addition, there are gifted street artists, economically poor, who prostitute their art and abilities into what I call art ghettoization. That is, the street artists must produce work that they can sell, rather than self-expressive art; in order to meet their daily minimum needs for food and shelter. Because much of what these street artists produce are credible copies of Morriseau and other Woodland Style artists, the Woodland Style is perpetuated as the norm for Aboriginal Art. Aboriginal art and value is thus diminished.

I would like to take a moment here to focus on one particular Aboriginal artist, Daphne Odjig. Odjig (Odawa/Pottawatomi/English) was one of the pioneers in Aboriginal art; she was also one of the first Aboriginal women artists to be recognized by the mainstream art establishment, and was dubbed “Grandmother Picasso” by Norval Morriseau. (Bailey, par. 2). She was born in 1919 at Wikwemikong First Nation on Manitoulin Island. Odjig’s father, Dominic Odjig (Potawatomi) and her mother, a war bride, Joyce Peachy. (Devine. “The Drawings and Paintings.” 137-141). Little is said about her childhood, but she dropped out of school shortly before grade 8 due to rheumatism. (Devine. “The Drawing and Paintings.” 137-141). She enjoyed drawing and copied illustrations from magazines, and often went to the library to access books on contemporary art. She is essentially a self-taught artist.

In the 1940’s, she moved to Toronto where she met her first husband, Paul Somerville (Mohawk/Métis), a World War II veteran. In 1945, they moved to British Columbia where she continued to hone her art skills. She became familiar with the West Coast artist, Emily Carr, and admired her work that was dedicated to the Salish people as

well as her perseverance as a woman artist. Also, during her personal art studies, she came upon a relatively new style developed by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, recognized as “Synthetic Cubism.” The Synthetic Cubist style is characterized by the introduction of texture, collage images, and a large variety of merged subject matter, the only limits being the artist’s own imagination and invention; this freedom of expression appealed to her. Odjig once stated “...everyone knows that my favorite is Picasso... I love the way he was able to put down his own feelings...He did not care about anyone else, you know. He was never intimidated... I love to distort things... Picasso distorted... Ever since I was a child, I elongated necks, and always did faces over the top of others. However, for me that had meaning to it... one face emerging from another would be like the spirit of that person leaving that Individual (McLuhan, and Vanderburgh 13).

After the death of her first husband in 1948, Odjig produced a series of melancholy canvases, which reflected a sense of personal loss and alienation from the mainstream. No trace of Daphne's Indian past was visible in these paintings. Throughout the 1950s, Daphne continued to experiment with Cubism, Abstract expressionism, and French Impressionism. I believe her own style was beginning to emerge in a black and white gouache work entitled *Intermezzo* (1957). Even though it was still abstract, her use of curvilinear lines, musical notes, shading, and spaces are reflected in her later works, such as *The Eternal Struggle* (1966) acrylic on paper. Curator Bonnie Devine (Anishinaabe) stated that *The Eternal Struggle* “illustrates the artist’s contribution and debt to the Woodland School of Anishinaabe Painters” (Devine. “The Drawings and

Painting,” 10).

In 1963, Odjig relocated with her second husband, Chester Beavon, to Easterville, Manitoba. She began to explore her own cultural heritage and the legends told to her by her grandfather Jonas Odjig. Also during this period, her sister-in-law, Rosemary Peltier-Fisher (Devine. “The Drawings and Paintings,” 10) encouraged her to produce a series of paintings for a child’s reader called “Nanabush Tales.” She once stated, “If you destroy our legends, you also destroy our soul” (Favell Racette. “Witness,” 50). Odjig was unaware of the work of Norval Morrisseau until a priest in Easterville introduced her to the work of the Anishinaabe artist. Daphne was surprised to discover that she shared similarities in form, line, color, and themes with Morrisseau. Yet, despite the similarities, she did not strictly subscribe to his X-ray style of Woodland art. Odjig continued to explore her personal style in the 1960’s and had her first solo exhibit in 1967 at the Lakehead Art Centre in Port Arthur, Ontario (Bailey par. 5).

It was during her time in Manitoba that Odjig worked with Jackson Beardy and Alex Janvier in the creation of Professional Native Art Inc, and prepared for their seminal showing at the Winnipeg Art Gallery in 1972. In 1974 she and her husband, Chester Beavon opened a gallery and business called “Odjig Indian Prints of Canada Limited” on Donald Street in Winnipeg (Sanchez 21-22).

Odjig is also recognized for her political pieces about colonialism. Probably the most famous one in Canada is displayed in the Northern Salon at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, an acrylic on canvas entitled “*The Indian In Transition*” (1978). “*The Indian in Transition*” is eight feet high and twenty seven feet long, and, in an email to

Bailey at the Canada Council for the Arts, curator Lee-Ann Martin, stated that the mural “takes the viewer on a historical odyssey from a time before the arrival of Europeans, through the devastation and destruction of Aboriginal cultures, to an expression of rejuvenation and hope (Bailey 1).

In 1995, in an interview with artist and curator Barry Ace (Anishinaabe) Odjig is said to observe that, “during the early 1960s, a double standard existed for Indian artists, and when a non-Indian artist experimented with other movements, it was considered a ground-breaking event, but when an Indian artist attempted the same, they were reproached by art critics, collectors, and art institutions” (13). Ace believed that Odjig was inferring that “Indian artists, to a large degree, are still subject to a perceived stasis and any signs of Modernity in their work are rejected as incompatible or incongruent with society’s ingrained stereotype of “Indians” (Ace 117-118). While there is room in the art world for a special niche for Aboriginal artists, as well as a need for this particular niche, there still does not seem to be room in that same art world for an artist, who happens to be Aboriginal, to participate as an equal in mainstream art. It is a double standard that both helps and hinders Aboriginal artistic development.

It was only when Aboriginal art was recognized as art in a European sense (e.g., as ‘fine’ art rather than ‘kitsch’) that grant funding became available in Canada. In 1994, the Aboriginal Arts Secretariat was established under the umbrella of the Canada Council for the Arts, Ottawa, Ontario (Trepanier 9). The excellence of Aboriginal art forms was not recognized nor was sufficient support provided to build up appropriate infrastructures until recently. Another arms length art establishment located in

Winnipeg Manitoba, the Manitoba Arts Council, implemented an Aboriginal Art Consultant in 2002 (Longbottom).

1.2 b Aboriginal Art Theories

Art theories examine the form, style, meaning, materials used, etc. to explain or interpret an art object. “There seem to be few theories created and written about Aboriginal art by either Aboriginal scholars and artists or Euro-Canadians (Mattes). Some Aboriginal scholars and artists tend to view much of the art created by Aboriginal people as being somewhat unique to the place or nation to which the artist belongs. While Aboriginal art may occupy a single niche in the minds of a majority of non-Aboriginal people, within the niche itself is a wide range of perspectives (one for each nation) and opinions, thus making it difficult to create a valid theory to encompass all Aboriginal art. For instance, how could an Aboriginal person from the Plains society make an adequate theory regarding the Totem Poles of the West Coast? On the other hand there do seem to be some common themes in Aboriginal art that are worth mentioning here. McMasters has identified some of these aspects, by the more modern artists, as expression of identity, both personal and cultural, and sometimes political. The more traditional Aboriginal artists are more inclined to be making art that preserves their culture, and makes that culture more accessible to a wider audience. Another similar theme is connection - connection to the land, to the ancestral history of the people, and connection to spirit (McMasters & Trafzer 13-17).

During my research, I came across Michael Parsons, a Western art theorist, on Canadian Aboriginal Art and Spirituality. Parsons has developed a theory called the “5

Stages of Aesthetics”. His five stages, applied to the Aboriginal art in the book, are 1) favoritism: intuitive delight to art works but without any inquiry, 2) beauty and realism: interpretation of the art work through the subject (the artwork is not separate from the subject; “transparency,” 3) expressiveness: artworks express a theme or an idea (beyond the subject shown), 4) style and form: recognition that the significance of an artwork is a social as well as individual achievement and 5) autonomy: capable of making independent judgments based on knowledge of arts and culture (Parsons 20).

These five stages are about cognitive development in the viewing of art. Parson’s cognitive developmental theory was applied to Aboriginal Art in a book titled *Canadian Aboriginal Art and Spirituality* by John W. Friesen and Virginal Lyons Friesen. This book is another example of non-Aboriginal people using a Western theorist to interpret Aboriginal art.

I agree with the first four steps of Parson’s theories regarding the viewing of art, but the fifth stage of autonomy will take time to develop. Only recently, many diverse Canadians are in the process of learning about the historical, cultural, and spiritual knowledge and experiences of Aboriginal people, from various Aboriginal points of view. As more people that are Aboriginal are reclaiming their culture, they seem to be simultaneously becoming aware of the history of colonialism and their collective and historical trauma as well, and the implications of that history. Alfred Young Man (Cree) agrees with this point of view and states:

Before an individual can understand and appreciate North American Indian art – practice and theory – it is advisable and even imperative to learn something about

the arguments that rage around it. In particular, it is essential to become familiar with the North American Indian perspective (Young Man 81).

The following two examples are from an Aboriginal perspective that describes art during the creative process rather than the viewing of art. The first is from Elder/Healer David Murdock (Anishinaabe), from Fisher River, Manitoba:

Art to me is my ceremonies. Art is spoken from the soul, from the Spirit. I look at ceremonies as a spiritual connection to the Creator, the Spirit of Life. All that is life, the sun, the moon, the stars, the trees, the grass, and the water beings. All is a connection when I create the pipe. I'm in the space of solitude, the serenity and peace. I need to be in that space to maintain the connection with the Spirits when I am carving the stem, carving the bowl, the Spirits guides me to do that. How would I say art in Anishinaabe: The Spirit that works, Manidoo Ke. I am only the vessel (Murdock).

The second description is by author and Elder, Maria Campbell (Cree/Métis):

Art is part of the mind or *mon tune ay chi kin* which translates to “the sacred place inside each one of us where no one else can go”. It is this place that each one of us can dream, fantasize, create, and, yes, even talk to the grandfathers and grandmothers...the thoughts and images that come from this place are called *mom tune ay kuna*, which means wisdoms, and they can be given to others in stories, songs, dances and art (qtd. in Gray 268).

From their description, Aboriginal art is about the creation of art, not the viewing of it. For Murdock and Campbell, art connects them with both the act of creation and the

object created. Many Aboriginal people believe art is an extension of self that contains soul and spirit and, as indicated in Murdock's and Campbell's quotes, art portrays an ongoing changing process rather than the static definition of Aboriginal art as continuance of old ways into modernity.

1.2 c Social Implications of Aboriginal Art Practice

Aboriginal art has altered in its ideas, beliefs, and method; many Aboriginal artists still oppose western theories relating to their own art creations. Many artists are fighting back in their own way, resisting Western artistic theories and rhetoric by breaking the silence through art, politically, socially, and culturally.

One of the earliest national acts of reclamation of Aboriginal art was the display at "Expo 67." One goal of this event was to give special attention and opportunity for Aboriginal Canadian artists to be showcased, within their own "Indian Pavilion." There were many personal, political, and representational conflicts in this venture, which implicated officials, Aboriginal leaders, and artists. Nine artists were selected from across Canada, whose art on exhibit was a memorable and controversial display. These were some of Canada's finest Aboriginal artists who through their work revealed truths that most Euro Canadians did not want to acknowledge. For instance, the title of Artist Alex Janvier's (Dene Suline) art piece titled, "The Unpredictable East" was changed to "Beaver Crossing Indian Colours. The forced change was very unpleasant for Janvier who since has affirmed, "to tell it like it is" in his artwork (Miller and Rutherford 159). The underlying issue beneath the name change was about control, and an attempt to ignore what was really happening in the political sphere of Indian/White politics.

The political tension changed from 1967 to 1992 in Indian/White politics, a change that is reflected in another centenary event, the art exhibit “INDIGENA: Contemporary Native Perspective” in 1992, at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull, Quebec. Although politics were overtly oppressive, Euro-Canadians were still disregarding the meaning behind the artwork. As Alfred Young Man, (Cree) art historian, states:

Euro-Canadians who read them may feel uneasy and ultimately culpable in a very nasty historical drama. In the struggle to define Native art some readers may suffer twinges of guilt and some may even lapse into throes of despair if they persevere through what can at times be excruciatingly insulting and accusatory material...

The Native perspective may not be easy to accept, particularly by those who feel adversely implicated by its conclusions (Young Man 83).

Because colonization has impacted both in obvious and subtle ways, apparent and hidden aspects of the lives of Aboriginal people in Canada. Aboriginal artists remaining true to their respective cultures could only create resistance art. That is, the art they create, and the place where they create from, does or pay homage to the non-Aboriginal, colonialist idea of what their art should be, or should represent. Such art contributes to the decolonization of the societies (Nations) from which they come, as well as having the potential to contribute to the decolonization of their Aboriginal viewers, and educating their non-Aboriginal viewers.

One of the objectives of INDIGENA: A Contemporary Native Perspective was to engage Indigenous Canadian artists to address issues politically, culturally, and socially. The exhibition also utilized two Aboriginal curators, both art historians, Lee-Ann Martin,

(Mohawk) and Gerald McMaster (Plains Cree). The following statement by McMaster reflects how he and Aboriginal Canadians felt about celebrating 1992:

“1992” has a paradoxical ring to it, at once depressive and optimistic. Other years pale in comparison. It is not only the Quincentennial year for the...Italian sailor Christopher Columbus and his landfall to the Americas, it is also the 350th birthday of Montreal, and the 125th anniversary of Canada as a country. There is no deficiency for justification to 'celebrate' 1992. Celebrating any of these events has precipitated abrasive reactions from indigenous communities (including some of the artists included in this exhibition), over the historical neglect, colonialism, and genocide of Native peoples of the western hemisphere (McMaster *“Reconstructing.”* par. 4).

INDIGENA was groundbreaking because the arts provided an expressive outlet for those issues that had been silenced. For example, *Red Savages meet Tight Pink-Skinned Men: 1492-1992* (1990) by Laurence Paul says “I cannot celebrate the hypocrisy which often uses legislation to steal legally and expropriate by pre-eminent right without the consent of or negotiations with the First Nations people” (McMaster. *“INDIGENA”* 158). INDIGENA gathered 26 visual artists and writers in one showing. One of those artists was mixed media artist Jane Ash Poitras (Cree Métis). Poitras currently resides in Alberta, Canada. She has been exhibited nationally and internationally and her art is included in various public, corporate, and private collections. Her contribution to INDIGENA was a collage Triptych entitled, “Shaman never die V (1990).” The piece contains Cree iconography with text that deals with acculturation and assimilation

through education. Poitras states: “Real power is about finding our own spiritual guidance and helping others find theirs; it is about admitting our own limitations and ignorance so that spiritual power and wisdom can work through us; it is about empowerment and transformation” (McMaster “*INDIGENA*”, 167).

As is illustrated in *Expo 67* and *INDIGENA* the arts are transformative and, as such, may contribute to decolonization. They assist many to connect to what is real good and true and help with mending our fractured legacy. Art has incorporated the use of spirituality, traditions, and customs. It is our driving force as both healer and warrior that has been intact within our psyche from previous generations through to today. Rebecca Belmore’s art may serve as a further example by another widely recognized Aboriginal woman artist of the link between the personal-emotional and the political. A billboard installation created by the Anishinaabe artist, entitled “Fringe” (2007), is located on the corner of Duke and Ottawa Streets in Montreal, Quebec. It depicts a woman lying down with her backside facing out with a wound from the top of her right shoulder across to the left side of her back with drops of blood (Bell 38). Belmore addresses trauma caused to Aboriginal women. This form of art representation is a public cry challenging Canadians to recognize the monstrosity of violence against Aboriginal women at the same time: this art piece connects with the mending of the spirit because it helps women to voice their pain. As Belmore states: “ I try to affect the viewer in an emotional sense, I am interested in feelings” (Bell 38). While viewing, the viewers may take the opportunity to talk, to bring forward their own personal issues that jumpstart the dialogue to ending their silence.

An art practice can involve and potentially impact a community when it is based in a community setting. Community art is characterized by interaction with a specific community culturally, geographically, or socially, utilizing an art facilitator. After university graduation, I became employed in various settings as an art instructor, including academic, artistic, and community institutions like Manitoba Arts Smarts, various Manitoba school divisions, and the Winnipeg Art Gallery. Currently, I am working with diverse communities that include all people, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. My art practice has given me the opportunity to gather diverse Aboriginal women together to express their stories visually, allowing community members to gain a better understanding of the damage brought upon us by colonialism. For me, art provided an opportunity to network with amazing people who are very interested and enthusiastic about my art practices, especially those practices that can benefit others.

The community art workshops I conduct are of a holistic nature that utilizes paint, canvas and collage techniques. These workshops have developed over time and still are evolving. Sometimes Elders and Healer/Helpers are involved as well in my art ventures and sharing circles. I never intended my art practice(s) to 'heal' but rather to share and create dialogue among community members, thereby helping them to overcome their silence. That such artistic, visual practices could be healing for the participants came as a revelation to me.

Facilitating art workshops in breaking the silence has given me the opportunity to assist people in the communities with telling their stories, for example about residential schools, and releasing some of the pain associated with those stories. I coordinated the

planning and beginnings of a ten-foot by ten-foot medicine wheel collage with diverse delegates and participants in the Truth and Reconciliation National Event held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, June 16-19, 2010. The installation uses a medicine wheel depiction, which serves as a visual catharsis for Aboriginal survivors towards releasing and disclosing their trauma through Aboriginal visual literacy and symbolism. The process was planned to happen in a form of 100 12- inch x 12-inch individual canvases completed and artistically rendered by a community of 100 conference delegates.³ The objective of this project was to create an artistic experience, which captures a celebration of breaking the silence about Aboriginal historical trauma.

Joane Cardinal Schubert's art piece entitled "The Lesson," (1989) is another example of art as a medium for breaking the silence. It is an interactive piece of art that, through scavenger hunts, triggers memories which allow people the opportunity to speak up about past injustices. "I have had senior citizens share their early childhood experiences in a tearful voice, unable to shake these experiences in a lifetime. This makes me feel not quite so alone, not quite so strange, not quite so childlike" (Cardinal-Schubert. "*Glancing Back*" 40).

I believe artists in various genres have always restored themselves consciously or unconsciously by their acts of creation. By offering workshops, I assist community based grassroots people in sharing in the experience of restoration through art. My art workshops are presented in a manner that also involves discussions and sharing among

³ Due to rain, only 46 out of 100 canvases were completed.

the workshop participants, as well as with me. Sorrow shared brings people together. It seems that the experiences and feelings that come up in the workshops relate often to the theme of surviving historical trauma. While I do not pretend to have the ability to restore whole communities, in my community art workshops, I do see various community members reaching out to each other, offering and receiving comfort. I see what appear to be the beginnings of healthy alliances, and I hope that such alliances, such mutual comforting, will continue and spread to others in the community. Thus, restoration of pre-colonial identity and pride may be happening on an individual level, there is also community being created. Acknowledging the damage inflicted by colonialism is helping others to confront it and to move beyond it is to me a form of resistance. Not just externally, like taking the land, but also internally, by destroying the fiber of Aboriginal communities and the pride of the people. Colonialism has been powerful. Retuning a sense of valuing all things Aboriginal to Aboriginal individuals within a community maybe be viewed as resistance as far as this work gives the power back to the people.

Some of the less obvious or subtler ways for a people to regain their power is to end the domination of the spirit and mind by the oppressor, to begin to dictate on a personal level the way they think, feel, believe, and behave. In itself, this is not decolonization as I am not sure that decolonization can happen on the personal level. However, in the absence of clear direction, it seems to me that healing on a personal level that transforms antagonistic forces helps to make people ready to engage in a higher-order of decolonizing efforts/struggles. When people become comfortable with themselves, anger does not go away but may be, more constructively channeled or directed for example into

political activism. It is less likely to be expressed in violence towards self, spouse, or children: energy becomes available to reach out to others in the community in a caring way and this is where decolonization can happen. At the communal level, personal recovery may translate into individuals working together for the common good, whether it is to assist a single community member or family, or to campaign politically.

1.3 Trauma Theories

A separate but equal line of inquiry in the current study has to do with the very real traumatizing impact that colonialism has had on Aboriginal people in Canada. Christine Courtois defines trauma as “experiences or events that by definition are out of the ordinary in terms of their overwhelming nature. They are more than merely stressful – they are shocking, terrifying, and devastating to the victim, resulting in profoundly upsetting feelings of terror, shame, helplessness and powerlessness” (4).

La Capra, a widely recognized trauma theorist discusses the lasting effects of trauma with regard to survivors from the Holocaust. He identifies two processes of remembering past trauma “acting-out” and “working-through.” He defines acting-out as a form of “repetition compulsion” or the tendency for that person to relive the past, and to exist in the present as if they were still fully in the past, with no distance from it. People who are acting out tend to relive occurrences, or at least find that those occurrences intrude on their present existence, for example in flashbacks or in nightmares. In the working-through, the person tries to gain critical distance from pain experienced in the past to be able to distinguish past, present, and future (LaCapra 188).

Herman, in her book *“Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence-from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror,”* introduces the idea of “story” as a necessary part of healing from trauma. Stories provide the context for a particular meaning of the trauma. However, she found that verbal stories might not be enough. That is, “at times, the patient may spontaneously switch to nonverbal methods of communication, such as drawing or painting. Given the “iconic,” visual nature of traumatic memories, creating pictures may represent the most effective initial approach to these ‘indelible images’” (Herman 177).

Both LaCapra and Hermann analyze how individuals are affected by trauma. Ratnavale is a consulting psychiatrist at Glenside Hospital, Adelaide, SA, and former chairperson of the Human Disaster Management council of Sri Lanka, describes a phenomenon that he calls “collective trauma” wherein a group of people is subjected to a traumatic event or events simultaneously. He goes on to say

The impact of chronic collective trauma tends to set in motion behavioral patterns which repeat the traumas of the past even to the extent of bringing it upon themselves. This suggests that just as trauma frequently becomes a central organizing principle in the psychological structure of the individual, so too may trauma be a central organizing principle in the psychological structure of a nation (3).

In the foreword to Anastasia M. Shkilnyk’s book entitled, *A Poison Stronger Than Love: The Destruction of an Ojibwa Community*, Kai Erikson relates the concept of collective trauma to an Aboriginal community. In trying to explain the complexity of the

damage done to the people of the community of Grassy Narrows, Ontario, Kai explains that, following repeated collective trauma, community members “wake from a numbness to find themselves isolated, living in a kind of social wasteland with no one to turn to... (having) lost both the physical and the spiritual health that comes from being in communion with kinsmen and neighbours who care” (xvi). I am not aware of methods to address such community-wide damage, or to facilitate the recovery of healthy community functioning. The damage to the community of Grassy Narrows is a direct result of colonization, of seemingly willful disregard for the wisdom of the Elders in decision making regarding both the relocation and the rebuilding of the community in the new location, and the subsequent poisoning (by mercury) of the river system on which the people depended for their livelihood. Such community-wide damage will not be addressed by the creation of a simple Aboriginal lens for viewing fine art. However, it may be hoped that in art, as in literature, interpretation of Aboriginal art by Aboriginal artists will contribute to some level of decolonization within the field of art.

The Indian Residential School was a long-term event in the lives of Aboriginal children (and generations of Aboriginal children) that overwhelmed most of the children and affected their ability to cope. They were unable to make sense of their experiences in the schools in light of their prior experiences on the land, with their parents and other families. Within the schools, children were punished for speaking their language (the only spoken language they knew (Miller 199)). Boys and girls were not allowed to socialize or play together (Fournier and Grey 56). Many of the children were physically and/or sexually abused by the adults who were charged with caring for them (Miller 146,

282). Those children who were able to cope within the residential school learned parenting styles that were demanding and punitive rather than supportive and nurturing (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski 75). Miller believed that very few of the children who attended residential school emerged ready to face the world; the vast majority of those children were traumatized by their experiences (Fournier and Grey 63).

The experiences of any single cohort of children in the residential school may be termed collective trauma, insofar as they experienced the horrors simultaneously. However, the fact that such experiences continued across generations, and happened in combination with other colonialist policies which were impacting on the parents and the communities, created a situation that is not adequately covered by the term ‘collective trauma,’ as they were multiple events, happening repeatedly rather a single isolated incident. The impacts of those colonialist policies and traumatic experiences are still being felt and expressed by Aboriginal people, in the forms of lateral violence, alcohol and drug abuse, physical and sexual abuse perpetrated by both men and women, and cultural identity issues (Brave Heart, Hunkpapa Oglala Lakota). In Brave Heart’s clinical social work with Native Americans, she developed a way of explaining this seemingly “inherited” damage, and she began calling it Historical Trauma (Brave Heart. The Historical Trauma Response, 11).

Brave Heart identified the theory of historical trauma specific to the Indigenous tribes of the United States in the late 1980’s. While individual trauma continues to be defined as Courtois described it above, Brave Heart refers to “the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding, over the lifespan and across generations from massive

group trauma experience” as Historical Trauma (Brave Heart. The Historical Trauma Response, 7).

The theory of historical trauma in the American context refers to the individual, communal, and intergenerational effects of the cataclysmic events of European colonization, such as “genocide, warfare, ethnic cleansing, massacres, forced assimilation, and relocation, and removal of children as well as physical, psychological and sexual assaults” (Brave Heart 7). Canadian therapists have broadened the definition of Historical Trauma to include the current, similar experiences of Canadian Aboriginal people:

In this model, historic trauma is understood as a cluster of traumatic events and as a causal factor operating in many different areas of impact; not a disease itself.

Hidden collective memories of this trauma, or a collective non-remembering, is passed from generation to generation, just as the maladaptive social and behavioral patterns are the symptoms of many different social disorders caused by historic trauma (Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski, Historical, 65).

Brave Heart also developed a “Historical Trauma Response” (HTR) theory as a means of describing individual behavioural responses to living with historical trauma. HTR often includes various types of self-destructive attitudes and behaviour such as suicidal thoughts and gestures, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, anger, difficulty recognizing and expressing emotions, and addictions. Associated with HTR is historical unresolved grief that accompanies the trauma; this grief may be considered impaired,

delayed, fixated, and/or disenfranchised. (Brave Heart. The Historical Trauma Response, 7).

In addition to describing historical trauma reactions, Brave Heart identified four interventions for healing on an individual level from historical trauma. The first intervention is called Confronting the Trauma and Embracing History.” What she means by this is having an understanding of the trauma that happened as well as the history of the person prior to the trauma. The second intervention is called “Understanding the Trauma,” which includes acknowledging the damage that was done. The third intervention is “Releasing the Pain” which generally means emotional release. The fourth intervention, “Transcending the Trauma,” generally means coming to terms with the past and no longer being controlled by it.

The HTR four step interventions will assist in leading the viewer and reader in this study in a process of understanding trauma that will create a new approach to art by and about Aboriginal women. It will guide the viewer and reader to understand the issues underlying the artistic renditions created by the artist that will describe the historical traumatic legacies artists, and others, have confronted while moving toward their own restoration. It must be noted that the analyses for this study will be clinically limited because the author of this document is not a clinical therapist.

1.4 Development of Spirit Mender Model

1.4 a The Medicine Wheel

Today, the utilization of medicine wheel methodologies and concepts by some Aboriginal plains societies is becoming more apparent in a variety of health, social and

educational programs. The medicine wheel is considered an instrument to assist Aboriginal ways of knowing to be placed back in the livelihood of Aboriginal nations and thereby “mending” our fragmented past into a cohesive whole. It serves as a tool of order, a reflective and self-reflective device for individuals who are seeking nurturance, identity, and solidarity. Its circular form encompasses categories to help us expand our way of organizing information and allows for insights and connections that may be overlooked in less circular ways of thinking. It celebrates and unifies our four human aspects without isolating or compartmentalizing our diverse understandings. The circle according to Donald L. Fixico (Shawnee, Sac & Fox, Muscogee Creek and Seminole) is the fundamental philosophy of traditional American Indians and it is integral to their belief system (Fixico 57).

The idea of using the four components in art analyses, for example, in Aboriginal literature, is not new. In my research, I came across an Anishinaabe writer, Armand Garnet Ruffo. He demonstrates to the reader how using medicine wheel theories can assist in interpreting a play. Ruffo uses a version of the medicine wheel developed by Anishinaabe Elder, Herb Nabigon. Nabigon calls his version the “Hub”: “The hub consists of three circles, one inside the other... the outer circle represents the negative or dark side of life. The second circle (the inner circle) represents the positive or light side, and the center circle represents the spiritual fire at the core of one’s being. The center circle has light and dark sides (Ruffo 97). Ruffo was able to use the Hub to interpret Thomson Highway’s play, *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*. Ruffo explains the development of feelings and actions of two of the characters as they move to and through

the directions of the wheel, which he has labeled in terms of dichotomous emotional states (e.g., caring/not caring, respect/resent, relate/envy and feel/inferior). The outcome of this exercise by Ruffo demonstrates that traditional analytical methods that are grounded in Aboriginal philosophies can lead the reader towards a new understanding of Aboriginal creativity.

The objectives of this study support the claim expressed by Ruffo, "I have strived to be as culturally specific as possible. What I am saying is that traditional methodologies, grounded in our own philosophies should be explored, and advanced (Ruffo 106). Following Cree Scholar Michael Hart, I also contend "there is no absolute version of the wheel" (Ruffo 95). Therefore, I am using another derivative of this paradigm, one that I have developed myself for the purposes of this.

1.4 b The Spirit Mender Model

The Spirit Mender Model (see fig. 1) developed by me specifically for the current thesis is based upon the concept of circles. Utilizing images by Aboriginal women artists of Manitoba, this model will serve as the visual metaphor that depicts the Aboriginal ethos through multiple lenses of Aboriginal epistemology, trauma theory, and story. This study is to assist the reader and/or viewer to gain a new understanding of reading visual art that uses an Anishinaabe worldview that western art notions and concepts are lacking. Contained in this model are the four cardinal directions, North, South, East, and West combined with the four human aspects and a centre. "The center allows for the relationship of humans to the sacred while still maintaining a relationship with the East and all creations in a balanced approach to life" (Duran "*Native American Post-Colonial*

Psychology,” 78). The centre is the intent of the image and in the circle is recognized as the “Fire Within.” As expressed by Elder Lillian Pitawanakwat (Anishinaabe) expresses this in the following way:

Each of us carries a fire within. Whether it is through the knowledge we have, or through our experiences and associations, we are responsible for maintaining that fire. And so as a child, when my mother and father would say, at the end of the day - My daughter, how is your fire burning? It would make me think of what I’ve gone through that day - If I’d been offensive to anyone, or if they have offended me. I would reflect on that because it has a lot to do with nurturing the fire within. And so we were taught at a very early age to let go of any distractions of the day by making peace within ourselves, so that we can nurture and maintain our fire (Pitawanakwat 3).

The centre also contains the five parts of story as described by Fixico. They are: 1) Time, 2) Place, 3) Character(s), 4) Event, and 5) Purpose. “Together, they are the sum of an ‘experience... Each part connects the other parts for the storyteller to weave his or her story in the art of storytelling that is poetry and fine entertainment and knowledge sharing in Indian communities” (Fixico 25).

The second concentric circle consists of the four human aspects, which are the spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental. If one of the four human aspects is not being taken care of, a piece of self is damaged or missing, and a person will be out of balance. The following statement by Community Helper, Brian McLeod (Cree) further illustrates the importance of recognizing the four aspects of self.

Growth and balance of spirit, emotion, body, and mind is a life long journey. Each aspect of our being is a way of learning: spiritual – intuitive, emotional – relational, physical – experiential, and intellectual – cognitive. Each part of our being needs to be fed in a way that is balanced to the natural world. It is important to look at each aspect individually while also understanding that each aspect is a relative to each other (McLeod par.8).

It is also supported by Duran that when working with directions “the Healer/therapist needs to first understand where the imbalance exists” (Duran. “Healing The Soul Wound,” 55).

The third concentric circle will contain the four Historical Trauma Responses, (HTR) interventions, which are placed on the wheel in the following order: East is “Confronting the Trauma and Embracing its History”, followed by the South, “Understanding the Trauma”. The West indicates, “Releasing the Pain” and lastly, the North with “Transcending the Trauma”.

The East direction is important because it represents the beginning of new narrative. Confronting the Trauma and Embracing History is the first step towards restoration:

Reconstructing of the trauma story begins with a review of the patient’s life before the trauma and the circumstances that led up to the event. Yael Danieli speaks of the importance of reclaiming the patient’s earlier history in order to “re-create the flow” of the patient’s life and restore a sense of continuity with the past” (Herman 176).

The South Direction “Understanding the Trauma,” will describe the underlying (HTR) features, for example, self-destructive behavior. The set of circumstances and facts will surface through exploration of the following nine derivatives which are 1) identification with the dead, 2) depression, 3) psychic numbing, 4) attempts to numb the pain through substance abuse, 5) suicidal ideation and gestures, 6) hyper vigilance, 7) fixation to trauma, 8) survivor guilt, 9) anger, and lastly 10) victim identity, among others (Takini Network 5).

The West is about the creative act because through a creative act like beading, the artist is “Releasing the Pain.” That is, the artist touches that spirit within, and the artistic creation, like beading, comes from that place. This is an example of the spirit mending property of creative activity, of working from that blank space which an artist enters that omits their conscious surroundings, attaining the “solitude, serenity, and peace” mentioned above by Murdock.

The North, “Transcending the Trauma,” is about moving beyond the trauma so that the person no longer defines her- or himself in terms of the trauma. The Centre of the circle is the place that allows for the description of the intent of the images and the meaning behind them.

2.0 Methodology

An Elder, speaking at a Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples meeting in 1992, stated, “If we have been researched to death, maybe it’s time we started researching ourselves back to life.” (Castellano, 98). The research in the current study is guided by the eight principles outlined by Kathy Absolon (Anishinaabe), and Cam Willett

(Cree/Scottish/British). The principles include respectful representations, revising, reclaiming, renaming, remembering, reconnecting, recovering, and researching (15).

The current study used five Aboriginal women artists and seven of their paintings (Appendix A- Figures). Two of the artists who participated were recommended to me; the other three were chosen based on my own knowledge of their artwork. I also made a conscious decision to include artists of different ages because I wanted to ensure that the artists in the study would contribute to a variety of perspectives.

I contacted each artist and explained that I was working on my Master's thesis in Native Studies and was hoping to include their art in a project with two purposes: analyzing their art using an Aboriginal lens, and examining their art in relation to recovery from historical trauma. I further explained that I expected to be using a derivative of the medicine wheel for both purposes. I made an appointment to meet each artist in a private location of their choosing.

During the meeting with each artist I gave them a copy of invitation to participate, summary and questionnaire, and a list of counselors (Appendix B). After they read the invitation, summary, and questionnaire and if they were still willing to participate, I offered tobacco and red cloth as per Anishinaabe protocol/custom. I chose red cloth rather than another colour because according to Anishinaabe tradition, red is the colour that the spirits can see. In approaching each artist, I explained the protocol. I told them that if a person accepts the sacred items it is recognized as a commitment to participate and that they were free to not accept the offering. Each artist accepted the offering.

Subsequently each artist also signed the consent form and the permission to use copyright material form.

We proceeded to conduct the interviews according to the questionnaire discussing their particular piece or pieces of art in relation to the questions. I took photographs of the artwork that would be used for the purpose of the current thesis. I subsequently transcribed and used to assist the writer in determining their placement of the artwork on the Spirit Mender Model

3. The Interviews: Aboriginal Women Artists from Manitoba

3.1 East: “Confronting The Trauma and Embracing History”: Jackie Traverse

I started in the East because:

The East is the place of all beginnings. The human being must return many times to the east in the course of a life’s journey. Each time, there will be new things to learn on new level of understanding (Bopp, Judith, Bopp, Michael, Brown, Lee and Lane, Phil Jr. 42).

In Brave Heart’s model, confronting the trauma and embracing history is the first intervention into the process of healing from historical trauma. In addition, the East of the Spirit Mender Model is the location of the “time” part of story. Traverse’s art works serve as a metaphor of the present and become the lesson for the future.

Traverse’s life journey consisted of many lifestyle fluctuations caused by her personal historical legacy. For instance, Traverse’s circumstances lead her toward drug addiction, criminal behaviors, and being in and out of jail. She was caught in a cycle of deviant behaviors that she tackled with resiliency.

I only recently began to notice the art of Traverse. During a conversation with her, she had told me about an art installation she had just created and wanted me to see. It was a white picket fence, made of wooden cutout dolls with painted faces of residential school survivors. She utilized a fence that is often used as a boundary marker and conceptualized this marker as a physical manifestation of bondage, an emotion likely felt by residential schools survivors. Her exhibit triggered my senses as well producing an epiphany, which was the beginning of the path I am on while producing this thesis.

Traverse (Anishinaabe), received her Diploma of Fine Arts at the University of Manitoba, School of Art (2009). She was recently cited in the *Winnipeg Free Press* (29/December/2009) for her works exhibited at the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games. The first piece is an outdoor sculpture of a larger than life Raven and a two-meter size Coca-Cola bottle depicting Nokomis Mikinaak, which means Grandmother Turtle. After the Games, the bottle will be auctioned with proceeds going to the Aboriginal Youth Legacy Fund. (Cook 29/12/09).

The underlying issue behind Traverse's work is the "Sixties Scoop." This period is termed the "Sixties Scoop", because the highest numbers of adoptions of Aboriginal children to non-Aboriginal families took place in the decade of the 1960s and because, in many instances, children were literally scooped from their homes and communities without the knowledge or consent of families or bands. As Fournier and Grey outline in their book *Stolen From Our Embrace: The Abduction of First Nations Children and the Restoration of Aboriginal Communities*, the removal of children into Residential Schools

continued into the removal of children into foster care and in many cases was the consequence of traumatization of the parents in the schools.

Traverse has produced a video titled, “Two Scoops,” which is a play on words from the popular Kellogg’s Raisin Brand’s advertising slogan “Two Scoops of Raisins.” “Anyways, it’s a story about me and my two sisters and how I lost them” states Traverse. “Two Scoops” (2009) is a three-minute video that relates the experience of Traverse, whose brothers and sisters were adopted out as part of the Sixties Scoop. In this video Traverse describes her traumatic experience of losing her siblings. It also shows the effect the situation has upon her own children because of missing relatives:

I was so excited I registered at the First Nations repatriation and I got them to look for my brother. They sent me letters saying that they found my brother. And I was so excited. Well, it wasn’t necessarily that they found my brother, they found his adoption files. And he was adopted to Pennsylvania. He was one month old. And he was adopted by a single male. So, they didn’t find him, they just know about where he is and he never registered. I don’t think he knows he has siblings. And that to me really broke my heart. Because I was yearning to meet him. I only saw him once you know. And I never heard from them again (Traverse).

According to Fournier and Grey, “Manitoba First Nations lost the greatest number, but aboriginal children from every province were sent to the U.S., particularly after the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 cut off the supply of adoptable aboriginal children there (89).

The following will describe the intent behind two works contributed by Traverse for this study. They are titled “Butterfly” and “Reminder.” The issue in “Butterfly” represents Aboriginal Missing Women and Children and “Reminder” is about Traverse’s positive reformation through art.

The image used in the current thesis, “Butterfly,” is taken from a video of the same name, which was a dedication piece for murdered women and missing children (see fig. 2). The video “Butterfly” (2007) was produced as a Crossing Communities art project in Winnipeg, Manitoba. “Butterfly” is a four minute and twenty-two second video that exposes the viewer to a kaleidoscope of visual images of missing murdered women and children. It is also a visual testimony of remembrance and mourning. The image in this study does not fully provide the effect of the video. Traverse states:

“I chose to make a video to honor these women. I chose the butterfly because the butterfly to me represents these beautiful women that are forgotten. And legend has it, if you capture a butterfly and if you whisper a wish, let it free, that butterfly will carry the wish to the Creator. Well, my wish is that these women not be forgotten. We honor their memory even if white society chooses not too.

Herman explains about the importance of social action in the process of recovery from trauma.

Social action offers the survivor a source of power that draws upon her own initiative, energy, and resourcefulness but that magnifies these qualities far beyond her own capacities. It offers her an alliance with others based on cooperation and

shared purpose...It brings out the best in her; in return, the survivor gains the sense of connection with the best in other people (Herman 207-208).

During the interview Traverse explained:

According to the Anishinaabe beliefs, the butterfly, *maemaegawaesuk* - "little feathers that dance in the wind" (Johnston, 73) - was created by a trickster named Nanabush. Nanabush threw pebbles to the winds and the pebbles became butterflies. Additionally, in Anishinaabe culture butterflies are regarded to have transformative powers.

The music contributes to the video very well. It assists in triggering your emotions while reflecting upon the faces and names of the victims. The music in the video contains a haunting chant with celestial choir voices in the background that can represent the prayer songs of the Anishinaabe.

Traverse's second image included in the current thesis, "Reminder," is about self-mutilation (see fig.3).

Self-mutilation has been identified as a common response to historical trauma.

"The initial injuries often produce no pain at all. The mutilation continues until it produces a powerful feeling of calm and relief; physical pain is much preferable to the emotional pain that it replaces. As one survivor explains: "I do it to prove I exist"(Herman 109).

Traverse's circumstances of her past compacted her into her adult years toward incarceration. During the interview, she mentioned that during incarceration she would find odd pieces of paper and toothpaste to create a collage. This period was an

awakening for her. Traverse knew she had a gift and it took time spent in a cell to come to an understanding of her destiny.

Well looking back now, I didn't even realize on what I was doing was collage, you know, it seems like a fancy word, when you are doing time...right? I think I go back to my cell and do collage, like that doesn't happen. So here I am. I guess being in jail the last time really turned things around for me. And that is where I realized the reason why messing up like this and ending up in jail is because I was not doing what I was meant to do. And I honestly believe I was meant to be an artist" (Traverse).

The art produced within women's prisons offers a look at creativity from a particular viewpoint that is outside of art markets and traditional legitimizing arts structure. "The offering of visual arts provides another interesting feature for women: they are nonverbal, providing the opportunity to voice in another medium, as has been documented in cases where physical or emotional trauma has occurred" (Gibbons 75).

"Reminder" serves as a metaphor of how art has saved Traverse. The cutting has been replaced by brushstrokes; the handcuffs represent restraint that had caused her to self inflict her pain, with a blue tie of ribbon that acts as a "Reminder" device of how art assisted her towards restoration. The use of the color black as the dominant one can be read as depression or as a sacred space that becomes the silent void during this creative act. The fiery richness of the blood from cutting becomes the center of interest. The bright colors used visually represent acts like "waking up" from numbness after a traumatic experience.

Traverse's work throughout her academic and community career speaks from her own experience that reflects historical traumatic issues that we as Canadian Aboriginal women too often recognize, but had not labeled. Through her actions and her art, Traverse is trying to bring light to the issues that affect women in the arts and Aboriginal people in general. In addition, by being an educator and helping other artists to find their direction, she is more clearly defining her own direction.

Q: Can you say something that is positive about your art even though it is based on your experiences and other people's experiences in trauma?

Definitely, it shows that I am resilient. That even though you know I come from this, you know, from this not very good place. Those are my life's circumstances, I cannot change them, but I can't dwell on them either and pity myself. But at the same time, I have to deal with them. So, I have found that, you know, getting through drug addictions, criminalization, being in and out of jail, other experiences that I had. I found that once I can, once I can work on it and transform these things that I'm feeling inside and put it all on paper, canvas, through video, some sort of medium, once I can do that, I kind of dealt with those things and they no longer haunt me or hold me. I can move on and I think that what I think I really have to do. I have to work out these issues myself. Like I said, I am not the type to go talk to a counselor and talk about these things, you know. I guess ah, held me captive inside my soul sort of speak. So, I work these issues out through my artwork and I am kind of excited to see the type of person I am going to be once I have dealt with them. (Traverse).

Thus, Traverse and her art images are placed in the East, the location of the circle of the first intervention, confronting the trauma and embracing history. That is, Traverse has come to terms with her personal history of loss of family and has been able to stop her self-injurious and criminal behaviors. The repetitive nature of those behaviors seems to indicate she was stuck in time. It appears that the creation of her art was instrumental in helping her move through that time and into a healthier lifestyle.

3.2 South: “Understanding The Trauma”: Third Generation Artists

Following the circle clockwise, we come to the South. In Brave Heart’s model, the second intervention into recovering from traumatic history is understanding the trauma.

Youth resides in the south. Youth are in the quandary stage – not old enough to be an adult but no longer a child, when they are either searching for what they have left behind in their child stage, or losing essence that is present within them, because of a lack of nurturance. The youth is searching for something and never finding it: searching for something that they used to have. “Who am I? Where do I come from?” As a youth, we look to remember our humble beginnings as the child; we search for that (Pitawanakwat 5).

This section will combine the art of Tiffany Seymour and Raven Peters, third generation artists. Third generation artists do not have the same life experiences that their predecessors do. Third generations are the children’s children of the residential school victims and survivors. As children of survivors, parents who were raised in an environment that was culturally, physically, and spiritually abusive, and lacked nurturance throughout their childhood have brought up third generations. Most third

generations do not speak an Aboriginal language, and some remain ashamed of their cultural identity. Even though they were not in the Residential Schools many still experience trauma.

In examining the art and relationships of Tiffany Seymour and Raven Peters, they have both expressed losses, loss of language, loss of identity and self-esteem, as well as loss of many people who were close to them, people who died by violence.

Art has served as an impetus to turn the negative into the positive, by bringing forward issues through the act of creation that has enabled our young people to release their hurt and their pain. While creating they are able to externalize thoughts and feelings and images that had been trapped inside. It is their way to express if these issues are going to be implemented in their lives; they have choices, which their predecessors did not, due to the growing awareness of historical trauma.

3.2 a Tiffany Seymour

Tiffany Seymour's (Anishinaabe) band affiliation is Big Grassy, Ontario. She is a painter and muralist, currently residing in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She is a recipient of the Manitoba Aboriginal Youth Achievements Award in Visual Arts, (2005). She is currently enrolled in the School of Art at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba where she is pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. The following is a description by Seymour about her connection with Residential Schools.

My mother and grandmother lived in Ontario and she moved here with my mother when she was very young and never went back. So, she grew up like I guess in a residential school and then when she had my mother, aunts and uncles some of

them got taken away from her. They were in the residential schools and my grandmother had tuberculosis. So, my mother had to stay with some French people for a while, so my mother grew up, I think when she was six years old on a farm. And during those times they weren't allowed to speak their language and stuff like that. And my mother and grandmother didn't want my mom to have any prejudice against her. So she didn't teach her the language. So, she never learnt that and then she couldn't pass that on to us" (Seymour).

My own mother told me that it was common for parents not to teach their children to learn their mother tongue. In residential schools, children were forbidden to speak their language, to identify with their heritage and spiritualism. Seymour is a product of this abusive, assimilative practice.

Seymour's mother sent her children to Roman Catholic Catechism classes but also took them to ceremonies and Pow Wows. She wanted her children to know that they had a choice, without condemning either one. Today, Seymour's mother is a devout Christian. Second generation parents often provided to their children an opportunity to view two worlds, the Christian world, and Aboriginal spirituality. The cultural resilience that was carried over by first and second-generation mothers and grandmothers was, I believe, an unconscious act for cultural protection. Seymour states:

We're not traditional. We don't believe in traditional ways. Like my mother grew up Christian and we would go to church. And my grandmother, she didn't really promote that. It was my mother's choice. So, she tried to influence us that way...

but she wanted us to have our cultural identity as well...She was trying to instill Christian beliefs in us. But, she would take us to all the cultural events (Seymour).

The cultural resiliency of Seymour's mother and all mothers made an impact on their children through all the adversities. It would seem that the matriarchs wanted to instill in their children a sense of pride and to realize that they had choices. Losses accumulated throughout the generations are now affecting women in many different ways, including violence against women and children.

Next is an art piece about Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Children by Seymour and is titled, "The Loss" (see fig. 4).

Q: Is there an art piece you did that discusses the issue of violence?

The Loss. When I thought about this piece, we had to do a social response. So, I picked the topic of Missing Aboriginal Women and the first girl that came to mind was Felicia Soloman Osborne. She was my Dad's girlfriend's niece. She went missing like a couple of years ago and they found her in the river. And they didn't find all of her. They only found parts of her. So, it was a disturbing case that happened there. No one knows who did it. So, when I did that I was going to do a piece like I, myself, as someone in the water. However, I wanted it to be like someone you know or this could be me because of course, I am in that category. So, with this piece it's like a tribute to the women who have gone missing. Each petal in the water has a name. There is the candle on the flowers going, like a vigil. So, this is more of the artwork I would like to do that I don't have a lot of. I would like to explore that more. The eyes are neutral and the body looks like it is not

really attached. But I didn't want to do something that was too gory or... Helen Betty Osborne is in there too (Seymour).

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has learned that many of the resulting issues that have affected families of the missing and murdered Aboriginal women are the result of the detrimental effects of colonization.

The grief, blame, and shame that many Aboriginal people experience are emotions that many families of the missing and murdered are feeling. Many families have not come forward for many reasons, whether it is based on shame and grief or whether the negative effect of addictions has also had an impact. (Jacob and Williams 135).

Women artists are taking the opportunity to publicly display these atrocities in their own way: "OTTAWA - A new report has added 62 more names to a growing list of missing or murdered aboriginal women and girls. The report by the Native Women's Association of Canada pegs the total at least 582...The report found that aboriginal females are more likely to be killed by a stranger than non-Aboriginal women" (Dempsey 21/04/10).

The common occurrence of missing and/or murdered Aboriginal women in Canada is very upsetting and needs to be addressed. In many communities throughout Canada, there is a growing spirit happening among women who are taking action to end violence towards women like bringing the missing and murdered Aboriginal women and children home. To help create strategies and solutions for eliminating these racist and misogynist injustices, Euro Canadians need to be educated about the history of

Aboriginal people to assist them to come to an understanding and to stop devaluing us as people.

Many female artists are using their creativity to assist in this combat using visual story about historical trauma. The impetus of this movement is about loss and reclamation but most importantly, I believe it provides an outlet designed to end the violence. Art in this context is neither about capitalism nor elitist social structure. It is about love and self-love, an emotion that was nearly terminated by the oppressors and the colonizers' attitude, which wanted to annihilate our culture, our lifestyles, and our spirit. Third generation artists such as Seymour are utilizing their artistic skills and abilities to assist in combating the effects of residential schools.

3.2 b Raven Peters

During the interview, Raven Peters (Métis) was employed at the Graffiti Art Gallery located in Winnipeg, Manitoba and was one of the participants in their Urban Canvas Program. The Urban Canvas program is a project that gives youth the opportunity to learn life and employment skills that assist in breaking economic and social barriers while providing a safe place for youth to develop themselves in art practices responsibly.

The lives of third generation children can be filled with negative experiences that include drug and alcohol abuse, lack of or poor parenting, and a host of other social disorders. The issues of low self-esteem, depression, and self-injurious behavior affected the life of Peters who found that art gave her a purpose, a direction, and a sense of well being, enabling her to cope with past issues.

Q: Is there historical trauma in your family?

In some way yeah, like I didn't like the solid motherhood thing that a lot of my friends do. Like they have their parents around and stuff and I didn't have my parent around me (Peters).

Among any others, Brave Heart comments on the harmful effect of “no parents around” or the lack of parenting skills.

The degree of trauma exposure for children is impacted by the quality of parenting... Native parenting role models and the lack of nurturing, as well as the presence of abuse in boarding schools, have resulted in parents who are uninvolved, non-nurturing, punitive, and authoritarian to varying degrees. Consequences of the boarding school legacy and spiritual oppression---poor spiritual foundations, weak Native identity, and poor family affiliation-are associated with Indian youth alcohol and other substance abuse (Historical Trauma Response, 11).

As early as thirteen years of age, Peters has battled the demons, which include self-injury, depression, prescription drug abuse and attempted suicide. Art became her way of coping with the whole situation.

Q: What was that first piece that helped you?

The first piece was ah, I think February 5th of 2007 and that night before I was like really bad and I just I didn't really want to do it but, I did see the next day and I just remember feeling like yeah I am glad I did not even like hurt myself at all. In addition, I got this beautiful painting that I did is totally out of what I normally do and it's just really helped me. And every time I do see it reminds me, that life is

beautiful and it is a lot more beautiful when you get past the dark part of life (Peters).

Q: What is the issue?

It's about getting past the struggle and once you do get past the struggle, there is a beautiful ending. However, it is not necessarily about ending it is like about rebirth. There's two people they're stick characters and they are pushing against a dark wall. And in that wall there are like pieces of their flesh, I guess it is like sure they are in this dark whatever and they are pushing through it and the middle piece has a flower in it. It is okay (Peters).

Peters' description of this image is about revelation and how art can make our spirit feel better. The painting, that to her seems so beautiful made her realize how art could benefit her emotional well-being. Unfortunately, this art piece was unavailable for the current study.

Contributed by Peters for this study is a "Prozac-Triptych" (see fig. 5). It is a piece about her addiction to Prozac, a dependency developed from not having any nurturance around during her upbringing.

Q: Can you tell me about "Prozac-Triptych"?

My first piece, well is dealing with depression. And probably medication, like you can see. The first one is about having a full bottle like Prozac, your dependency on it. You have your jar and it's smooth sailing with your depression for the next 30 days... Well for me I did not like taking Prozac. But, you get to the last one and you don't really don't have anything else after that. Like zero refills so, you take

that last pill and then after a while of not like taking them, you're off that dependency. In addition, you are going through withdrawals. Then you do something that is not good. And the red on your last image, what is that about? Whatever represents blood? Like I remember once when I got off Prozac I hurt myself a lot more. To me this is a positive painting. Because I am past this like, I do not need Prozac to be myself (Peters).

This piece is about Peters' journey towards restoring herself by getting off the dependency of prescription drugs. Peters admits that her ideas come from inner feelings and due to her emotional state.

This emotional state, usually evoked in response to perceived threats of abandonment, cannot be terminated by ordinary means of self-soothing. Abused children discover at some point that the feeling can be most effectively terminated by a major jolt to the body. The most dramatic method of achieving this result is through the deliberate infliction of injury (Herman 109).

Peters was able to overcome her self-injurious behavior as well as her addiction through her production of art.

The second art piece by Peters is entitled "The Loser" it's about low self-esteem (see fig.6). Low self-esteem is a common issue among many Aboriginal youth.

Q: What is the piece "The Loser" about?

It is about image I think...yeah, it's image. Like this is a woman body. But, you cannot really tell. You can assume it is an obese man. But, like it represents the menstrual cycle. This one is about the image. Even though I was not feeling it at

the time, it is what's come out. Like this here, is the women's cycle. And you can tell this person is feeling like upset and stuff. In addition, the mask represents hiding behind something that is not real. So, like beauty, makeup, and all that junk. And the words here, its society calling down on this person and beating this person up for just living I guess. And you can tell this person does not really feel good at all. And it thinks it maybe better to end it all. However, this mask can also represent like ah, I put it in there just to make it a little less negative. So maybe it could be whatever you want it to be but to me it has both meaning like hiding but also like staying strong. (Peters).

Peters' connection to the Aboriginal community was through art and youth programming that promoted group solidarity. It is great to see that our young people are putting effort into networking with others that have prompted a sense of belonging, which is so important in the healing process. They are conveying trauma, spiritually, emotionally, physically, and intellectually through art, and that has contributed significantly towards restoration of themselves as responsible artists. Now Peters is sharing a relationship with her mother that is mending through art.

Q: Your mother was in prison for a while and she is out now. Do you have a great relationship with your mother?

Yeah. It took a long time to get to where we are right now but it's good.

Q: Does she like your art?

Yeah, she thinks it is amazing. (She smiles).

Seymour and Peters demonstrate in their art and in their discussion (their story) a comprehensive understanding of the historical trauma as it has played out in their personal lives.

3.3 West: “Releasing the Pain”: Val T. Vint

Releasing the Pain is the third intervention in Brave Heart’s model of recovery from historic trauma. The west is also recognized as the “time to let go of anger and disclose emotion because a lot of times emotion turns to anger and that’s when it’s no good. It can be very harmful. It’s better if the emotion turns into a release through crying, which is a good way. It is a time when you can process your emotions and no longer be afraid or shy, when you are brave enough to tell your story. If there’s anything we need to get rid of most often that’s when we do it on our adult journey because sometimes we keep our mourning, our losses in family and life until that time when we realize we need to let go if we’re going to have a healthy journey (Lee 10).

Val T. Vint (Red River Métis), artist and community activist, acquired her art skills growing up. She obtained a Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honors degree in the School of Art at the University of Manitoba (1997). Currently, Vint is registered as a Master of Education candidate specializing in Adult Education. Vint’s artistic skills and abilities have been utilized in design and costumes in various theatrical and television productions like Lisa Meeches *Tipi Tales*, Manitoba Theatre for Young People and the first National Aboriginal Juno Awards. She also has been in many visual art group exhibits, including her own, “Out of Focus,” held at the Urban Shaman Gallery in 1997.

Former Minister of Culture, Heritage, and Tourism, Eric Robinson appointed Vint, to serve as a board member representing Aboriginal artists at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Presently she resides in her home community of Winnipegosis, Manitoba, and is a dedicated Kokum (Grandmother) of five grandchildren. She periodically tours Manitoba conducting workshops in urban and rural communities.

Vint's Great Grandfather is Elzear Goulet, who was a compatriot of Riel and is considered the first martyr of the Métis Resistance Movement. Vint's Grandmother is Marie Therese Courchaine, the famous Métis poet, teacher, and radio personality. (Vint Personal Conversation). Courchaine's daughter Claudette, mother of Vint, went to school in a convent at Pointe Coupee, now known as St. Aldophe, Manitoba, and left early to begin Vint's original family of three daughters and two sons.

Vint's parents eventually gave up their children, including Vint, which created for those children an absence of cultural awareness as well as a broken chain of extended family. As stated by Vint, "My effects from residential school would be that I didn't grow up with my family. I ended up in a foster home because I had parents who had no idea about family, raising children, nothing" (Vint). Brave Heart states:

With the break-up of the extended family, many Indigenous women found they had no role models to teach them parenting skills. As many Native people were raised in boarding schools, the traditional roles and ways of parenting by both Native men and women were lost. The attitudes and norms which then sprang up in parenting styles, such as harsh physical punishment, emotional abandonment, lack of parental

involvement, and insensitivity to children's needs added to imbalance in the family" (70).

"So I was set up for failure from the beginning, so of course that's an effect because I didn't have a family. So that was the first big effect" (Vint). To date, Vint does not know the entire history of her family, only bits and pieces.

When Vint entered into foster care her experiences led to child labor, and included experiencing name calling, such as 'You dirty black Indian Bitch' by her foster mother. Vint was placed on a farm for a few years during her adolescence and given a cubbyhole in the basement of their house during her residency. Yearly, the foster parents would leave for Alberta for a 2-week vacation leaving Vint at home to care for the farm. She was labor for the foster parents as well as a punching bag for their racism. At the age of 17, when she was given the opportunity to leave the child and family foster system, she did. Separation from birth parents either because of Residential School or the Child Welfare System, regardless of age, is potentially traumatic. Loss is a common experience in adoption for all members of the adoption triangle: birth parents, adopted children, and adoptive parents. The Métis Elders from Camperville, Manitoba believe that they shared the same traumas as the Indian Act Indians with regards to the residential school and the child welfare system:

The widespread practice of removing children from their Métis families and placing them in white, middle-class foster and adoptive homes was ideologically an extension of the residential school model, perpetuating the false image of the unfit

Métis parent. The provincial child welfare system mutated into a state-sanctioned transfer of children from one group to another group (Logan, 81).

The art piece contributed by Vint entitled “That Little Girl In The Moon” reverberates with meaning about sexual abuse (see fig 7). As Vint states, “It was literally a vision she had by memory and where she went during the creative act of this piece.”

Loosely based on the poem “That Little Girl in The Moon” (1992), the entire piece is about reaching back to the comforts found in the roles of Grandmothers. The moon in the various Plain Aboriginal heritages represents Grandmother. Grandmother moon controls eco-cycles upon the earth, which includes women during their month cycles, “Moon Time.”

Q: If historical trauma in art practices is about restoration, how is it defined in your art?

Well, I have one piece of work that is a bead work combined with a piece of poetry, or with some prose, some kind of writing. In addition, that is the only piece that I have, currently published. More are coming up shortly but that one was done in the early nineties. And that one was about trauma, about past trauma. And that was a hugely healing piece to do. How many beads did that take? I think it was about 190,000 beads. Oh yeah, a lot of beading. It is called ‘That Little Girl In The Moon.’ It’s in a book called *Spider Women: A Tapestry of Creativity and Healing* and it was published by Carol Rose and Joan Turner who edited it. And it was a collection of women’s writings (Vint).

The Poem: ”That Little Girl In The Moon”

All that sleepy little girl had to

do was tip up her chin and look through the
window to see the Moon and get herself tangled
in the branches of the tree outside.

The moon looked after that little
girl often in the night and that little girl loved
the moon.

The moon sang to that little girl
lullabies, in the cry of the whip-poor-will and the
call of the loon.

She shushed her and soothed
her and gently kissed her when she cried. The
little girl went to the Moon and snuggled deeply
in her warm embrace.

The Moon told her stories and
calmed the little girl's soul. The moon washed
the stained memories from that little girls skin
and gave her a place to hide.

She hid that little girl from

-her father,

-her uncle

-her mother's lover.

That little girl is scared again.

She cries and the Moon feels her pain. Her cries
awaken the memories hidden within my skin.

My skin know the secrets that little
girl told to the Moon. I want to wash my skin and
like that little girl, I want my skin to forget

The pain,
the shame.

I understand now why the Moon speaks
to me. She has been by me always, giving me strength
and soothing my soul. She sang to me lullabies, in
the cry of the whip-poor-will and the call of the loon.

She shushed me and soothed me and
kissed away my tears. She washed the memories from
my skin and gave me a place to hide.

She hid me from

-my father,
-my uncle,
-my mother's lover.

(Vint 104-105).

In the piece, the child is trying to detach herself from her pain that is represented
upon her skin. She wants a new skin to rid her of her emotional pain and scars of sexual

abuse, “All that sleepy little girl had to do was tip up her chin and look up through the window to see the moon get herself tangled in the branches of the trees outside” (Vint).

Today, Aboriginal women are creating visual images releasing trauma utilizing various traditional art forms and materials like beads and hide. When the artist is in the creative process such as the act of beading, it is a form of working through one’s trauma, as suggested by Shirley Green:

Another woman told us that our work could not be perfect, as only the Great Spirit could make something that was perfect. She told us to make sure to place one bead so that the design was not perfect. There was much laughter at these lessons and sharing of knowledge and supplies. One woman told us of how she would get up early in the morning so that she had an hour or two just to sit and bead before she went to work. Beading was like meditation, soothing to the spirit (171).

Métis Survivors of the residential school system share many of the same intergenerational impacts as those of First Nation Survivors. Long-term impacts, such as the loss of parenting skills, the inability to express feelings, as well as the effects of the loss of language, culture, and self-esteem, are, unfortunately, impacts that affected attendees, despite the fact Survivors may recall both positive and negative memories of their school days. It is noted that the intergenerational impacts of residential schools may vary in their frequency in relation to other Métis or Aboriginal communities (Chartrand, Logan, and Daniels, 83).

Q: What is celebratory about trauma in your artwork?

That it is not me anymore. It kind of separated, even separated the time.

Therefore, that ah, just to remove it from myself. So, that really, that was a huge one. Actually that one was. I had to work so I had to do some talking. But, for that, when I did that piece, it was ah, it came out of two weeks of total silence (Vint).

Creating art let Vint release the emotions that had haunted and silenced her.

“Place,” the part of story that is in the West, becomes a reference point that is needed in life so that we know where we come from and who our relatives are... In this way, every place has a story relating to human experience” (Fixico 25). Vint’s picture, “That Little Girl In The Moon,” depicts the place where she went as a child when she was being sexually abused. Creating the picture provided a means for Vint to release her pain.

3.4 North: “Transcending the Trauma”: Lita Fontaine

In the Spirit Mender Model, the North represents Transcending the Trauma, the fourth and final intervention in Brave Heart’s model of recovery. In terms of story, event is located in the North.

And so as I share this story with you, I am sharing how I became reconnected with my ancestors. It is through them that we learn the sacred teachings that they carried. I cherish this story because it is not only about an awakening inside of me, but an awakening of a community that came together to celebrate a way of being and spiritual nourishment. We still go back to our original teachings, because that’s where our food for life comes from, to nurture that spirit that is forever searching in

life's journey (Pitawanakwat 9).

Generally in Anishinaabe heritage, the North represents detachment, seeing how all things fit together and spiritual nourishment. We go back to the original teachings in the north direction because that is where spirit is nurtured. The North also means reconnection with our ancestors. Such reconnection is indicated in the work of Lita Fontaine.

Fontaine, (Anishinaabe/Dakota/French)⁴ holds a Diploma in Fine Arts from the School of Art, University of Manitoba, (1997) and a Master of Fine Arts Degree (Intermedia) from the University of Regina (2001). Fontaine's mediums include photo-based art, photography, mixed media, and installation. She is an Arts Educator and is currently employed as the Artist in Residence with the Seven Oaks School Division in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Fontaine has participated in a variety of solo and group exhibitions; her collection of works can be seen within the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the Manitoba Legislature, and several private collections. One of her most notable exhibitions was "Lita Fontaine: Without Reservation," that opened at the Winnipeg Art Gallery in January 2002. She has received several awards from the Manitoba Arts Council, The Canada Council for the Arts and the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation.

The three art pieces that will be analyzed are "Displacement," "Mom," and "Mom

⁴ Lita Fontaine is the sister of the writer of this document.

Too.” Knowing about the maternal history of Fontaine will let the viewer make the connection between art, her mother, and her grandmother.

The first piece, “Displacement” (1999-2000), is about denial of heritage and identity (see fig.8). The residential school experience caused many in previous generations to lose their connection to their Aboriginal identity. Depicted in the image of “Displacement” are two words, “Run Run”; “Run Run” serves to place Fontaine back to her childhood with the perils of alcoholism that affected her father and family. Her mother hid knives in the house, and took her nine children and hid in ditches, running from the violence at home. That piece of Fontaine’s history is omnipresent in the two words of “Run Run.” The attitude of staying on guard and waiting for the other shoe to drop affected Fontaine. For example, coming into an alcoholic home after school, she had to size up whether she was going to be safe or not, or how she is going to keep herself safe – would she have to run for safety.

The term “Run Run” may also be a connection to Fontaine’s own grandmother. For example, Fontaine’s grandmother passed away during one of the many tuberculosis epidemics that affected Aboriginal nations. As a result, Fontaine’s son ran away to live in British Columbia because he did not want his family to be affected with tuberculosis and no one knew or heard from him for years.

It is true that Aboriginal children of today did not witness the death, terror and suffering of their ancestors caused by diseases like tuberculosis and social ills. However, it is also true that many of them witnessed rampant domestic abuse, alcoholism, and drug addiction of their parents who witnessed the lack of self-

esteem and unresolved grief of their parents (Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski, 76).

From the 1880s to the 1950s, tuberculosis was the dominant threat to the health of Manitoba First Nations. In fact, Fontaine's maternal grandmother, Harriet Daniels (Dakota, Long Plain, 1881-1932) was one of the victims and passed away when she was 51 years of age, leaving her daughter Rose Anne Contois (1919-1992), orphaned at thirteen years of age.

From small children whose families were torn apart by epidemics or alcoholism, in communities where all traditional institutions that might have protected orphaned children were being broken up and invalidated by the Church there was no cohesive "safety net" left to shelter them, and so these children were left to be raised at residential school in inordinate numbers" (Lawrence 107).

Daniels was buried in Valley River, Manitoba (now recognized as Tootinowaoziibeeng Treaty Reserve) by her son, Magnus Contois. She was buried there because when she married Joseph Contois, Métis, she was stripped of her home community and Indian Status as defined by the *Indian Act*. Fontaine's mother did receive back her Indian Status after Bill C-31 was passed. In the year of 1985, Canadian Parliament passed Bill C-31, "An Act to Amend the Indian Act", that allowed limited reinstatement of Indians who were denied or lost status or Band membership in the past. Fontaine's father acquired his Indian Status as well. Fontaine's family became 6(1) Status Indians which meant that they can pass on their status to the next generation because both parents were status.

Also contained within “Displacement” is another layer of stereotypes utilizing images from the Dick and Jane reader, a book that was used to teach children to read from 1930’s-1970s. Stereotypes and labels have also plagued Fontaine throughout her life right up to and including today. During her childhood, Dick and Jane images served as a connection and metaphor of her heritage. Jane is the girl that had dark hair in that reader which is why Fontaine related to her. As a child of six years of age, Fontaine thought she should look like a fair skinned young girl with a feather in her hat. In fact, she blended the image of Jane wearing Aboriginal stereotypical attire into her own psyche. This was the role modeling Fontaine accepted and the way she thought she should be.

Later, upon returning to university to obtain a Master of Fine Arts degree, Lita Fontaine found empowerment breaking these stereotypes, which resulted in utilizing a circle, the hoop. The hoop represented in this piece is a stamp of elimination of the stereotypes as well as the social demon of alcoholism that plagued her throughout childhood and adolescence. Crosses and the boxes are part of the geometric designs and motifs of the Dakota in beadwork and quilts. This serves as a visual metaphor that dominates her recognition of being Dakota since she became a Sun Dancer in Dakota sacred ceremonials. She also inserts symbols of the United States and Canada because of ancestral connections. Fontaine transferred her Indian Status membership from Sagkeeng Reserve, near Fort Alexander, to the Long Plains Indian Band, the home of her maternal (Dakota) ancestry. The Dakota heritage is represented as land for Fontaine and is key to

her identity. Grounding in a particular geographic location is significant in maintaining one's identity.

In the image "Mom," there is a photograph of a young Rose Anne Contois (Dakota/French), with her classmates (see fig.9). The children are reflections of the assimilation process. Each child looks like a paper doll cutout or in the words of author Robert Arthur Alexie as china dolls. "They all have the same haircuts, the same blouses, dresses, socks, and running shoes. They all look alike. They all look like china dolls" (Alexie 28). In this image, all students have the same short haircuts, with bangs. This reminded me of a time when my mother placed a pot upon our heads, and cut our hair around it, a method used in residential school. Habits formed in residential schools are carried over into succeeding generations, conscious or unconscious forms of memory imbued in the children of Residential School survivors. It must be noted that Fontaine's art expertise is collage and collage entails fragmented pieces that can be put together to make a whole. The processes of Fontaine's artwork are composed of fragmented pieces of history provided by her mother that manifests into several visual collages. These pieces become a collage of memories.

Children of traumatized parents may be assumed to have taken upon themselves some of the behaviours and emotional states of their parents. This matrix of unhealthy family relations frames the process of memory transmissions and locates this social phenomenon on an individual level, thus affecting every person in Aboriginal communities and beyond. This is how universal trauma enters the lives of individuals (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski 76).

The art piece entitled “Mom Too” portrays what Rose Anne Contois became shortly after her high school graduation, a domestic worker (see fig.10). Domestic work tends to be a low class job, one for which girls were:

trained while at residential school. Children were not permitted to speak their native language or to have any type of relationship with their tribal roots. Children were physically made to look as closest to their white counterparts as possible in order to strip them of their Native Americaness ...and the girls were usually taught how to sew and perform other housework (Duran “*Native American Post Colonial Psychology*” 34).

The strength and resiliency of Fontaine’s mother kept the family together.

Additionally, Rose Ann Contois conquered her demons and retired quietly, peacefully, and contented. She was a Residential School survivor who ultimately transcended.

Fontaine’s sense of belonging came full circle in her maturity. As she states:

But I think I am at a point in my life with the past with intergenerational trauma and dealing with my art exhibition “Without Reservation.” Those issues are done. I don’t need to prove myself over my identity anymore because I’m at a point in my life, I’m 50 years old, that I don’t have to prove anything to anybody anymore.

You know I know who I am and I am comfortable. So coming around my Elderhood stage full circle, I’m letting go of some of those things. And art has helped me deal with those traumatic issue likes sexism and racism (Fontaine, Lita).

Fontaine’s art were stories of the past that came into the present. Fontaine’s stories became the “sacred lake,” the metaphor of women of the past and present. Fontaine’s

matriarchal remembrance of her grandmother and mother are representative of that. It provides the “blood memories” and an understanding of the pain inflicted in the present which now can be transformed into the positive.

Fontaine has come full circle in understanding her history and is embarking upon a new journey in the sacred hoop of life in her art practice. She is presently creating new works that draw upon her traditional knowledge of land from her own personal journey in ceremony. Fontaine’s art and her narrative in the current thesis indicate that she has transcended the historical trauma that she experienced.

4. Conclusion

In my personal life, I have experienced colonialism in the forms of racism, sexism, violence, and alcohol abuse. I discovered that the experiences I had were similar to those of other Aboriginal people across Manitoba, particularly the Aboriginal women. In my studies, I encountered the reality of the existence of historical trauma and it explained so much to me that was previously missing in making sense of my life and the lives of my family members and friends. In looking at the artwork by various Aboriginal women in the Manitoba art community, I began to wonder if the concept of historical trauma could be applied to an interpretation of their work.

Brave Heart was instrumental in extending the notion of historical trauma into her work with American Indigenous peoples. While she continues to define trauma using western terms, she talks about historical trauma in the context of Aboriginal people as the “individual, community, and intergenerational effects of the cataclysmic event of the European Colonization, such as genocide, warfare, ethnic cleansing, massacres, forced

assimilation and relocation” (Brave Heart 7). In the Canadian context, as in the American one, the major traumatizing factor affecting Aboriginal people was the colonization and subjugation of the people. In Canada, the *Indian Act* was the instrument that legalized control over the Aboriginal people by the Canadian government, and led the creation of the residential school system. The residential schools overlapped with policies implemented by the Child Welfare System to remove Aboriginal children from their parents and societies.

Responses to these historical traumas that are still in evidence in the lives of Aboriginal people today include such things as self-destructive behavior, alcohol abuse, lateral violence, and internalized oppression. These responses are evident in both Canadian and American Indigenous populations. To assist her clients in the restoration process and healing from the historical trauma, Brave Heart developed a model consisting of four broad categories of interventions: 1) Confronting The Trauma and Embracing Its History, 2) Understanding The Trauma, 3) Releasing The Pain, and 4) Transcending The Trauma.

The medicine wheel is a visual tool that is commonly used in plains Aboriginal societies to assist with creating order in a chaotic world. It captures the circular thinking that is common in the worldview and languages of many Aboriginal nations. It allows for the separation of things for the purpose of teaching and analysis while visually demonstrating the interconnectedness of all parts. The circle utilized in this study consisted of four quadrants with a centre. The four quadrants consisted of East (Spiritual), South (Emotional), West, (Physical) and North (Mental). Beginning in the

East I placed the first of Brave Heart's interventions and continued with them around the circle, ending with the fourth intervention, transcending the trauma, in the North. The centre of the circle contains five derivatives of story or image, which include 1) Time, 2) Character, 3) Place, 4) Event, and 5) the centre. These derivatives are also located in the directions of the circle. This is the Spirit Mender Model.

Aboriginal arts continue to be viewed and judged, for the most part, using a western lens. An Aboriginal lens must include an appreciation of the spiritual significance of the act of creating as well as an appreciation of the personal and collective histories of Aboriginal peoples and an understanding of colonial history. While developing an Aboriginal perspective for viewing all Aboriginal art is beyond the scope of the current thesis, the Spirit Mender Model provided an Aboriginal lens that is my own, for viewing the work of these five Aboriginal women artists. For the Aboriginal women whose art and interviews were included in the current study, the Spirit Mender model made sense. That is, for these women, creating their works of art was healing, and they identified with my placement of their work within the Spirit Mender Model. Further, although the women's art was more representative of one quadrant than another, the women were able to see their artwork as also reflective to some degree of the other quadrants that is, the paintings reflect more than one simple aspect of the healing processes mentioned by Brave Heart.

4.1 Limitations of the Current Study

The Spirit Mender Model was useful for examining the art of the Aboriginal women in the current study. The Spirit Mender model was developed logically and

intuitively with a comprehensive understanding of Aboriginal Traumatic history; it definitely makes use of an Aboriginal lens for viewing, examining and appreciating Aboriginal art. Because participation in the current study was limited to five Aboriginal women artists, the model would be useful in interpreting other Aboriginal women's art in particular or other Aboriginal artists in general.

Because the focus was on Aboriginal traumatic history, as revealed in art, there was no time given to an aesthetic critique of the women's art. An aesthetic critique was not the intention of this thesis, but I will engage in that kind of work once I am able to organize an exhibition of the Spirit Mender Model artists.

While I make no claims to being a professional therapist, I feel that the Spirit Mender Model may be useful as a way for artists to think about the ways in which their art may contribute to the healing of historical and personal traumas of Aboriginal people, and women in particular. Given that the Spirit Mender Model is a lens created by an Aboriginal person, for evaluating the art of Aboriginal people, it is a contribution to the decolonization of perceptions of Aboriginal fine art.

I believe that the Spirit Mender model carries enough validity that it would be worthwhile to examine its applicability to the art of other Aboriginal groups. Further, given that it is based heavily on historical trauma response, it may be useful in examining the art of other groups who have experienced historical trauma.

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Appendix A.

Figure 1. *Spirit Mender Model*

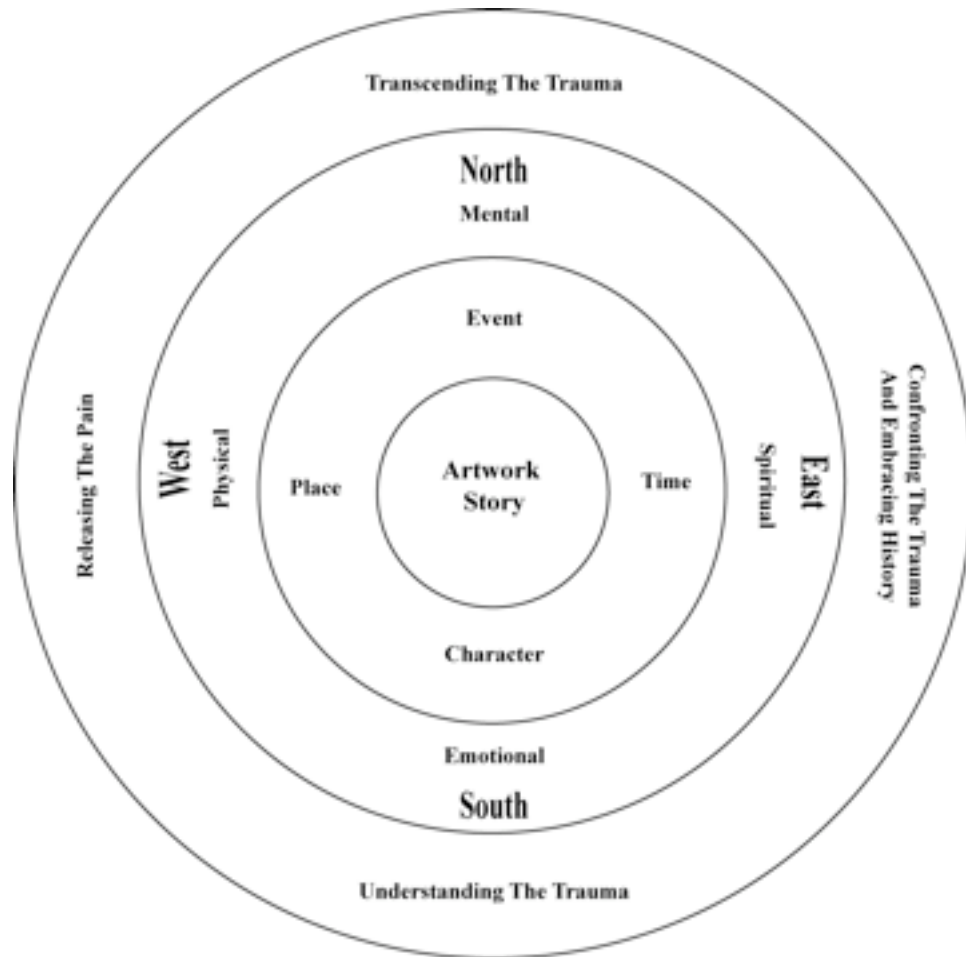




Figure 2. *Butterfly*
Jackie Traverse



Figure 2. *Reminder*
Jackie Traverse



Figure 4. *The Loss*
Tiffany Seymour



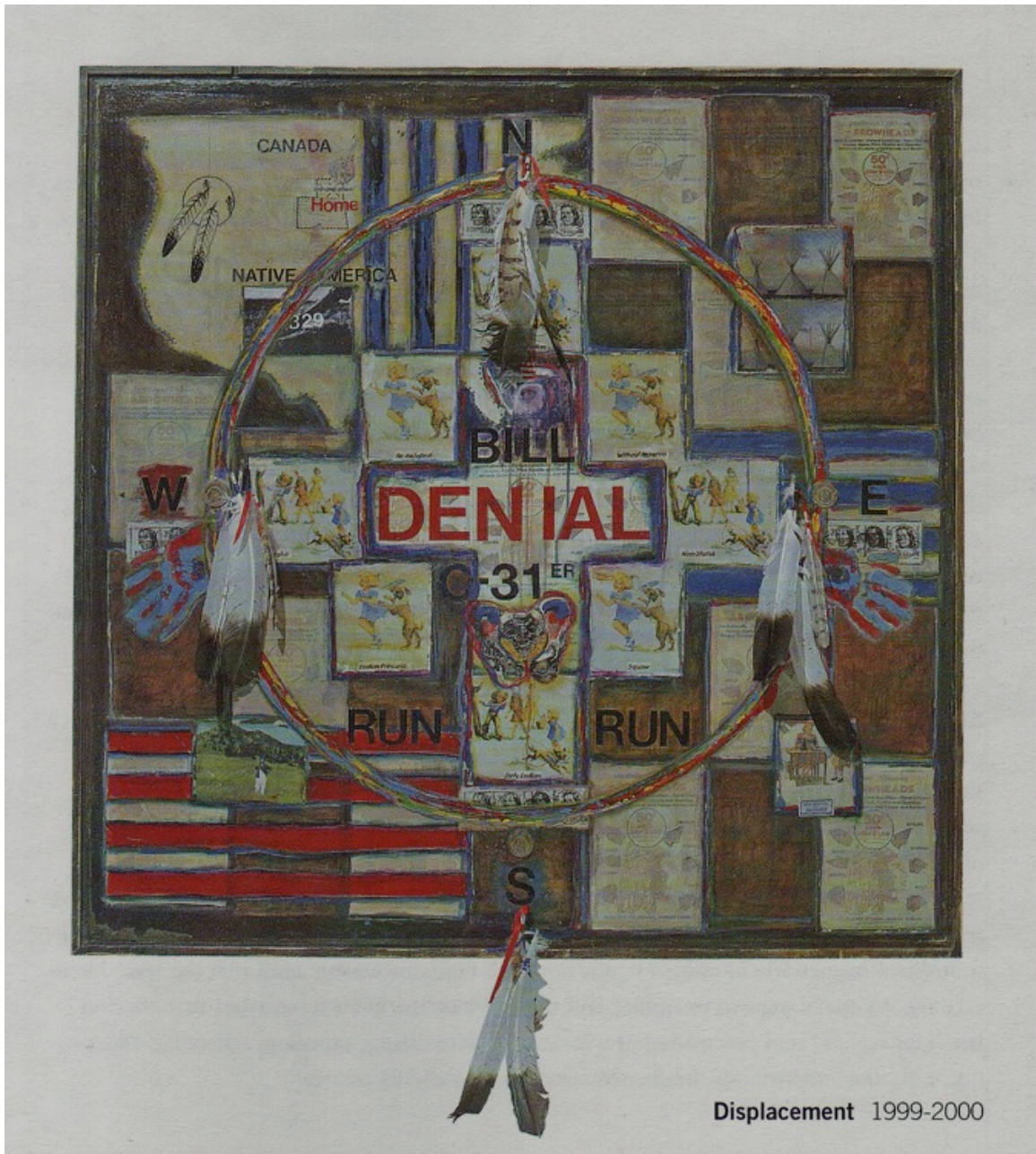
Figure 5. *Prozac Triptych*
Raven Peters



Figure 6. *Loser*
Raven Peters



Figure 7. *That Little Girl In The Moon*
Val T. Vint



Displacement 1999-2000

Figure 8. *Displacement 1999-2000*
Lita Fontaine

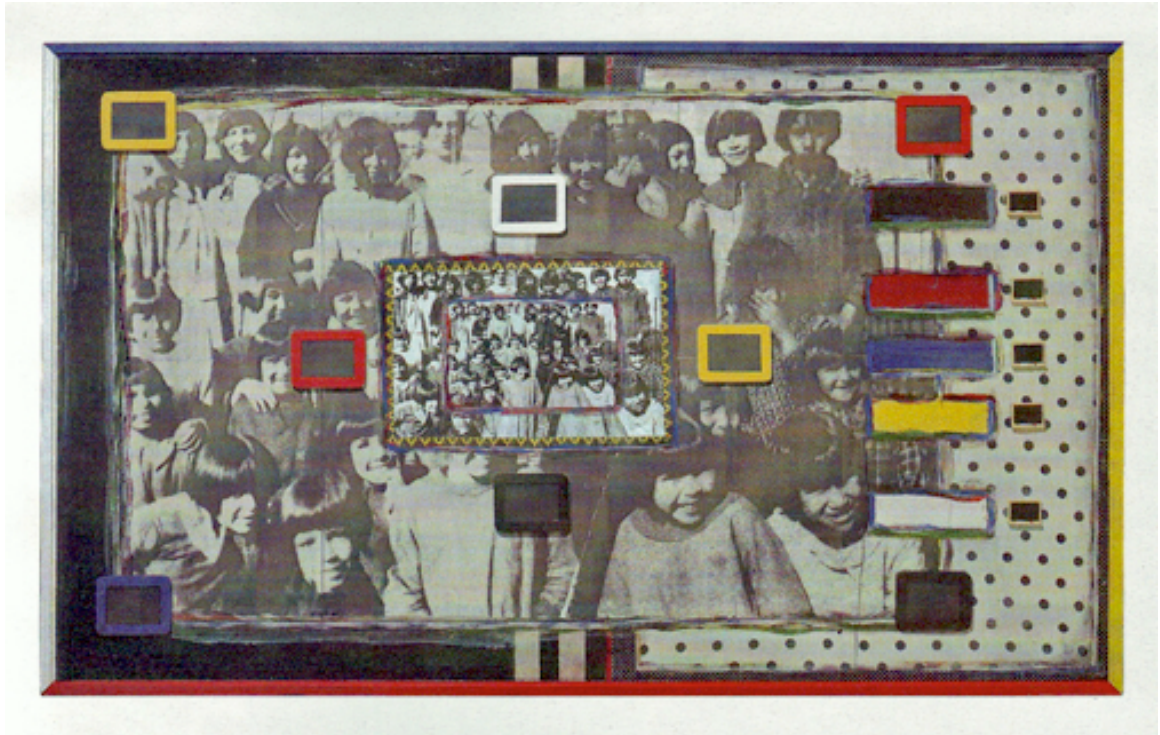


Figure 9. *Mom*
Lita Fontaine



Figure 10. *Mom Too*
Lita Fontaine

Appendix B

Invitation Letter

Study Title: **Spirit Menders: The Expression of Trauma In Art Practices
By Manitoba Aboriginal Women,**

Dear

My name is Leah Marisa Fontaine. I am a graduate student in the Department of Native Studies at the University of Manitoba. I am conducting a research thesis as part of the requirements towards my Master of Arts degree in Native Studies, and I would like to invite you to participate. I am studying women, art, and trauma. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to answer the attached questions and meet for an interview and studio visit. The meeting will take place at a mutually agreed time and place and should last up to 3 hours. This interview will be audio recorded, digitally video and photographed, so that I can accurately reflect on what is discussed. I will transcribe and analyze them along with my advisory committee. If you feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions, you do not have to answer any that you do not wish to.

Participation is confidential. Study information will be kept in a secure location at the University of Manitoba. The results of this study will be published or presented at educational conferences and colloquiums. Participation can be anonymous if you wish.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have. If you want to participate, please sign the consent form and return it to me. You will also receive a list of counselors if you feel the need for one. This is standard protocol as per the request of the

Review Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba.

Please contact me at the following number and email address to discuss your participation. I will contact you within the next week to see whether you are willing to be involved in this study. Thank you for your consideration.

With Kind Regards,

Leah Marisa Fontaine

Summary and Questions

Art in its various forms of expression plays a crucial role in historical trauma in the lives of Manitoba Aboriginal women. Creative outputs practiced by our colonized female art predecessors served as coping mechanisms in affirming resiliency and survival of heritage. Women continue utilizing art in various mediums to combat injustices that have been forced upon their lives politically, socially, and culturally. Aboriginal artistic responses to life experiences act as a catalyst towards restoration through catharsis, transformation, and even the celebration of difficult circumstances. This study will bring these issues to the forefront with a wider audience in the academic, artistic, and cultural arenas.

Female Aboriginal artists will base this study on culturally appropriate Medicine Wheel methodologies of past and present visual works, stories, and life experiences. The Medicine Wheel is an ancient symbol that acts like a mirror helping us to understand things we cannot see because they are abstract ideas. It is also an Aboriginal paradigm by which Aboriginal people view the world. These methodologies will parallel with the researcher's Aboriginal perspective.

This study will consist of contacting artists are interested to participate. They will be approached with tobacco, as most Aboriginal protocol require. Acceptance of tobacco will indicate to the researcher that they are committed. After contact with interested participants, researcher will go to the community and conduct a studio visit. The studio visit will enable the researcher to interview artists about art practices and will include the selection of art for an art exhibit and catalogue.

This study will contribute in providing additional written material about women, Aboriginal art, and culture that is in demand. The results of this study will provide enlightenment, understanding, and truth by openly confronting historical trauma through art and will serve as a tool to be used in the mending of Aboriginal women's Spirit.

Questions

***NOTE: The following questions are subject to change during interview.**

1. What do the words "Spirit Mender" signifies to you?
2. Will you define in your own terms an ancestral matriarchal perspective of art?
3. How has dealing with historical trauma affected your art practice?
4. What traumatic issues were dealt with through your own artwork?
5. When did you first receive the impulse to create?
6. Was the creative process a means to transcend and where?
7. If you had influences in your art practices, what or who would it is.
8. If historical trauma in art practices is about restoration and how is it, defined in your art?

9. Do you think the male population of artists is creating works towards restoration?
10. Is land reclamation, art?
11. What connection or influence does Earth have on your artistic expression?
12. What is celebratory about trauma in your artwork?
13. Is your art about resistance and why?
14. If you speak an Aboriginal language, does it have an affect on your art expression?
15. What kinds of messages is your art trying to convey to women?
16. Has historical transmission affected women in your family?
17. Are there any women/men who influence you?
18. Was there any women artists in your family and what kind of art did they do?
19. Do you think being two spirited gives you a different outlook?
20. Is gender a factor in expression of art?

List of Counselors

ABORIGINAL HEALTH & WELLNESS CENTRE OF WINNIPEG

Provides access to contemporary and traditional health and wellness resources that enhance the lifestyle and living conditions of the urban Aboriginal community. Healing is holistic, culture-based, and accessible to all Aboriginal people. United Way supports the Mino-Pimatiziiwin (MP Healthy Living) Program that provides a continuum of services for First Nation, Métis and Inuit Aboriginal men currently residing in Winnipeg.

EYAA-KEEN CENTRE

Provides therapeutic treatment programs and services, which focus on the spiritual, mental, emotional and physical well being of Aboriginal people. Eyaa-Keen offers Aboriginal based, multi-disciplinary, integrated treatment programs for Aboriginal adults who have experienced trauma and/or major loss. The Centre's programs explore new ways, behaviors, and disciplines so participants can contribute more as parents, workers, and mentors within their family, community, and society.

FORT GARRY WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE (FGWRC)

Offers individual counseling programs (one time, crisis and long term), support groups, resource and referral services, public education and workshops. Volunteer opportunities and training are also offered to help women realize their potential. The Outreach Centre offers a drop-in, clothing program, a harvest program, and offers community support and emergency resources for women and their children. As a partner in the Asset Builder's Partnership, offers training that builds the capacity of low-income households through managing their finances and saving money to invest towards assets that will yield long-term benefits for individuals, their families, and their communities.

KĀ NI KĀNICHIIK

Seeks to awaken the spirit of Aboriginal people through culturally based education, training and employment, leadership and community development, and healing and wellness programs and services that are rooted in the restoration and reclamation of cultures.

THE LAUREL CENTRE

Provides individual and group counseling to women who have experienced childhood or adolescent sexual abuse. Programs include individual and group therapy, couples' counseling, parenting groups, anger management, and short-term crisis intervention therapy. A preventive outreach program for girls 6-16 years is also offered in conjunction with Andrews Street Family Centre.

MA MAWI WI CHI ITATA CENTRE

A bridge between the community and the “systems” that interact with it, Ma Mawi works to create preventative, supportive services and resources for Aboriginal families living in Winnipeg of, by and for Aboriginal people. Ma Mawi’s work is based on a recognition and understanding of the importance of extended family systems. Using a community-based approach, Ma Mawi puts emphasis on working with the strengths and capacities of people they serve, creating opportunities for leadership and strong community involvement. United Way supports capacity building opportunities for members of the community in the Volunteer Program, Youth Program and Community Training and Learning. United Way is also invested in the North End Wellness Centre, providing support to build capacity between the five partners at the Centre. As a partner in the Asset Builders Partnership, offers training that builds the capacity of low-income households through managing their finances and saving money to invest towards assets that will yield long-term benefits for individuals, their families, and their communities.

NATIVE WOMEN'S TRANSITION CENTRE

Offers a safe home addressing the needs of aboriginal women and children who have been victimized and need assistance to make healthy lifestyle changes. All services are delivered within the context of Aboriginal culture and traditions. United Way supports programs that address family violence and related issues, build supportive networks and develop healthy coping skills. United Way also provides support for completing the Circle, a mentorship program that supports women as they leave the Transition Centre and move back into the community.

NORTH END WOMEN'S CENTRE

Assists women to gain control over their lives, break the cycle of poverty, and achieve more independence. The Centre offers individual and group counseling, learning and volunteer opportunities, skill development to local women, along with crisis counseling, and referrals. The Centre also has a drop-in area for women and their children, runs a

second-hand clothing shop, and operates an employment preparation program.

NORTH POINT DOUGLAS WOMEN'S CENTRE

Creates opportunities for women in North Point Douglas area to develop their potential to engage fully as citizens in their neighborhood and in the broader community. The Centre is a place where local women can access information on housing and employment while networking with other residents. The Centre also offers computers with Internet access, laundry facilities, advocacy, and assistance with resume writing. Offers a parent supporting parents group.

NOR'WEST CO-OP COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Located in the Inkster area, Nor' West works in partnership with the community to promote health and well-being. Nor'West sees a strong link between the health of the individual and the health of the community where the individual lives. With support from United Way, Nor'West has a community development team working in three different locations: Brooklands, Weston and Gilbert Park. This outreach includes three neighborhood resource centers, programming for teens, and a catering program. As a partner in the Winnipeg Asset Builders Partnership, offers training that builds the capacity of low-income households through managing their finances and saving money to invest towards assets that will yield long-term benefits for individuals, their families, and their communities.

RAINBOW RESOURCE CENTRE

Envisions and works toward an equal and diverse society, free of homophobia and discrimination. It does so by encouraging visibility and fostering health and self-acceptance through education support, resources, and outreach.

The Peer Project for Youth program focuses on providing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-Spirit and Queer (LGBTQQ) youth with the opportunity to be positively supported and affirmed as LGBTQQ individuals. The Peer Project enables young people to create social change while learning valuable skills, increasing their self-

esteem and self-confidence, and reducing feelings of isolation.

WEST CENTRAL WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE

Provides advocacy and skill development for local women while addressing safety, poverty, and childcare issues in the West Central community with time-limited funding from United Way. Resources include a craft program, child play area, a clothing exchange, educational and health information sessions and a community cupboard.

WOMEN'S HEALTH CLINIC INC.

Provides women-focused health services with an emphasis on health education and prevention. The clinic provides a range of medical and nutritional services, individual and group counseling, and information sessions. Support groups focus on topics such as reproductive health, weight preoccupation, smoking, and motherhood stress. The clinic operates a resource centre where women can access a wide range of information on health concerns.

YMCA-YWCA OF WINNIPEG

Provides an integrated range of programs to strengthen individuals, families, and communities. United Way supports youth leadership development, specialized women's programs, seniors groups, services for isolated mothers, volunteer training as well as health, fitness and safety programs for all ages. United Way is increasingly investing in the Y's community development initiatives as well as providing resources to help subsidize children, youth, adults, and seniors who need services but who cannot afford the full fees.