

## IV. Results

Through interviews with 50 First Nations adults (15 men, 35 women), 437 critical incidents were elicited concerning what facilitated mental healing in this population. An attempt was also made to obtain critical incidents that reported the hindrance of mental healing, but so few hindering incidents were reported it was determined that no new knowledge would be added by their inclusion in this study.

The 437 critical incidents were organized into 14 categories. In this chapter, these categories are first described. Second, methods used to establish the reliability and validity of the categories are reported. Finally, a framework of healing beliefs is provided based on an analysis of the healing outcomes of the critical incidents.

### *Description of the Categories*

This section presents each of the 14 categories by providing a brief description of the category, examples of incidents in the category, and an indication of the range or variation within each category. Categories are presented in random order as there was no attempt to rank them in order of importance. All the incidents describe what has facilitated healing for the First Nations people who participated in the study. The generic term *healing* was used in this study, as no attempt was made to define healing in terms of one part of the person—physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual. First Nations people tend to see healing from a holistic perspective (Medicine Eagle, 1989), and any effort to differentiate one from another would contradict the belief in the interconnectedness of these different dimensions of the self.

### *Established Social Connection (16 incidents)*

This category involves getting beyond one's own world and connecting with other people. Establishing a social connection means that the individual is able to facilitate healing by getting socially involved. This category does not include incidents that involved getting direct help or support from others, but incidents in which the individual was socially involved with other people. Many of the participants saw their tendency to withdraw from people as problematic. Participants described feelings of loneliness, anxiety, feeling left out, and of not being accepted. These participants felt that it was necessary to go out and do things with people and to have fun. Examples range from going to Friday night dances to learning activities involving other people.

### *Examples*

After my separation one of the things I did that helped in healing was to get involved in extracurricular activities like ceramics and ballroom dancing.

They helped me to get out of my shell and to build self confidence. I'm still not a good dancer but I went for three years because it helped me to feel more in control and confident

in myself. These activities helped me to feel OK to be myself in a social situation and that helped me in my healing.

Making new friends at school and building a community helped a lot. I wasn't home and I didn't have a community or connections. The sense of belonging is really important to me. Having people around me made me feel like I could connect with this place and even though they are not my family, they care about what I have to say.

Making friends was very healing. I forced myself to get to know people. Initially it was just at school and school related activities but then we would later invite them over for dinner or we would do things socially as well. This definitely helped me to get over the loneliness.

### *Anchoring Oneself in Tradition (32 incidents)*

This category refers to the individual's learning about and participating in First Nations culture and traditions. It does not include participation in traditional ceremonies, but does include all other aspects of traditional culture and knowledge. These events ranged from involvement in traditional events such as Pow Wows to participating in traditional crafts such as beadwork. Many participants considered gaining knowledge of their culture to be an important step in becoming healthy. Cultural confusion and lack of connection to traditional culture and values were often identified as reasons for anxiety and pain. In addition to cultural alienation, participants reported a personal lack of identity and a need for roots and tradition. Activities that reconnected people with tradition and strengthened cultural identity were seen as healing.

#### *Examples*

Pow Wows and other cultural activities are healing for me. Once the drumming and singing starts and the masks come out I feel an energy. It's a spirit feeling that makes you feel good. I feel good because of the energy. This sort of event gives me positive energy.

Finding out who I was again helped me a lot. I left residential school not knowing who I was. I was like a shattered person. Reconnecting with my culture and with spirituality gave me back my identity. I knew who I was again.

I left home and hitchhiked back to my reserve and that helped a lot with the healing because I stayed there until I learned about my Native culture. It was a learning quest and that was very healing for me. My grandparents and relatives taught me about my culture so now I feel like I can fit into both cultures.

### *Exercise (20 incidents)*

This category means that participants engaged in some form of physical exercise such as running, hiking, or cycling. It does not include activities that are specifically directed toward self-care. Participants often saw exercise as a way of ensuring that the physical dimension of the self was in balance. The significance of the interconnectedness between the physical, the emotional, the mental, and the spiritual was frequently mentioned. Exercise helped participants to feel better about themselves because they were able to feel stronger and more capable.

### *Examples*

Running helps me because I feel better about myself when I run. It has also helped me to reduce stress. One of the best things about it is I can do it whenever I want. Running also helps me to be by myself but I'm not alone because I see lots of new things.

Physical fitness, specifically running, helped me a lot. It gives me a high and it does something for my self-esteem. Doing something for my self makes me feel good about myself. I feel better and look better and feel a sense of accomplishment. Running calms me too because I am in another state I don't think about anything and don't feel any stress.

Exercise helped me. One of the Elders told me that exercise would be good for me and would relieve tension. I found that after I would go to the gym I would be relaxed and energetic. Exercise helps to put everything into perspective for me it really relieves stress.

### *Self-Care (3 incidents)*

This category includes forms of looking after oneself and doing something specifically for oneself. It does not include exercise. In this category, the person does something for himself or herself in order to feel better. To practice self-care seemed to affirm self-worth. The issue of respect was mentioned as an important value for First Nations people. In this category respect is extended to respect for self.

### *Examples*

I didn't use to take care of myself. I'm learning. Like my body. I'm taking care of my body and it's neat to realize that I'm doing that. It's good for my self-esteem.

I started doing traditional crafts again when I was sick. This has made me feel good again because it's something that used to be a big part of me and it's something that I do just for me. It's helped me to be myself again and to feel good about myself.

Doing things that are good for my self-esteem has helped a lot. Even if it's just getting my hair done or buying some new clothes.

### *Involvement in Challenging Activities (7 incidents)*

This category includes doing something difficult in the form of a self-directed challenge. It does not include self-care or exercise. Incidents ranged from public speaking to finishing grade 10 algebra. By exercising self-discipline and perseverance through challenging activities, participants were able to feel better about themselves.

### *Examples*

Standing up to my ex-husband was healing for me. Even though it was really difficult I knew it was something I had to do and I felt much better afterwards. Being able to do it was good for my self-esteem and that is good for my healing.

Going back to school was really challenging, but it was something that helped a lot. I worked really hard and it helped me to feel good about myself.

### *Expressing Oneself (55 incidents)*

This category included the expression of feelings and emotions through varying channels such as talking, crying, laughing, and screaming. Participants also used many creative ways to get feelings out such as listening

to music or going into the woods and screaming. Several participants mentioned the significance of keeping this emotional dimension of themselves in balance through the expression of emotion. By learning how to identify and express emotion, participants were able to build up their emotional dimension. In learning how to express emotions in an appropriate manner, participants reported that they gained strength and balance in this aspect of their lives. Anger toward an abuser, for example, could be expressed in an effective, nondestructive manner and not turned inward against oneself. An important aspect of learning how to identify emotions is that such action provided people with an awareness of the problem, which facilitated problem-solving. This is a large category and indicates both the need and tremendous healing benefit derived from expression of emotion.

### *Examples*

When I first moved to Vancouver and was attending a downtown college, I lived down in the skids in a hotel room in the East side. One night before Christmas the loneliness really hit. I had been in my room and it was around 11 o'clock and I had been crying. I remembered the wolf and how it goes out and howls until its mate answers or its family group answers. I went down to the waterfront late at night and I did exactly that—I screamed and hollered and cried my eyeballs out until I let people know back home that I really missed them. This felt good to do this. The next day I got a letter from back home and I thought that the Creator is right. I just have to go out and express myself like the wolf. It may have been a coincidence but I saw it as a sign. Going out and screaming was good. If I did it in public it would have created tension for people. Wolves howl when they are lonely so it's all right to be sad and lonely and let people know, so the wolf really helped me.

Crying helped a lot. I was hurt so I cried and that was important in getting over it. If I didn't cry the hurt could have turned to anger which I may have taken out on my children. Crying recognized that it was hurt which was OK so I was able to get it out. Crying just flushes it all out.

Crying helped me a lot to get rid of emotions that I had been keeping inside. I needed that because all those years of hurt needed to get out. It was encouraged in the treatment center and that part really helped with my healing

### *Obtaining Help/Support From Others (91 incidents)*

This category included incidents in which the individual obtained help/support through encouragement, acceptance, validation and/or reassurance from another person. This category does not include incidents such as social involvement with others, but incidents in which the individual obtained direct help or support from others. This help was obtained through both professional and nonprofessional sources and ranged from supportive parents to encouraging counselors. This is a large category and illustrates the collective orientation of many First Nations people. The extended family, friends, and members of the community are seen as a natural support for First Nations people and are therefore turned to in times of need.



### *Examples*

Talking to people helped, especially talking to my sister. I told her what I would like to do and I got reassurance from her that it was possible to survive this. She would question me about my relationship. We talked about coping skills and she showed me how she was coping. That's what I was looking for. Because she worked in the band office she knew the routes to go for help. She was also a model for me. The ways that she coped made her a role model for me to follow. My sister knew me and knew strengths in me that I didn't see and she told me these things. I felt better about myself and my abilities to face this problem.

My friend helped me because she is trustworthy. There are only a few people in the world that I count on and she is one of them. She is nonthreatening in the way that she talks and I know that she really cares for me. When she listens she doesn't say anything for a long time. She doesn't try to change my feelings like some people do. When I finished talking she said she felt bad that I was feeling that way and she encouraged me to get help and to tell my Mom.

### *Participation in Ceremony (33 incidents)*

This category included traditional First Nations ceremonies. Examples ranged from the Sweatlodge ceremony to the Pipe ceremony. This category did not include the more general category of learning about and participating in First Nations culture and traditions, but dealt specifically with traditional ceremony. There are many different ceremonies in First Nations culture, and ceremonies vary from nation to nation. Many of the incidents obtained overlap with Expression of emotion and Anchoring oneself in tradition, but were chosen because they were identified specifically as participation in ceremony. Participation in ceremony is a traditional form of healing used by First Nations people for thousands of years and is still recognized as an important form of healing today. Certain ceremonies such as the Sweatlodge ceremony and the Smudge ceremony were mentioned numerous times. The Sweatlodge ceremony, for example, is often considered to be a cleansing or rebirthing ceremony. Elements of this ceremony such as the darkness and the drumbeat are likened to the experience of being in the womb of Mother Earth. The process of sweating can represent the intermingling of the participant's life fluids with Mother Earth's. Powerful images such as these help to facilitate healing for those who participate in the Sweatlodge ceremony and other First Nations ceremonies.

### *Examples*

I was having a hard time going to work because I was drinking a lot to avoid thinking. I was given the option of going to a treatment center or being fired. I went to Roundlake Treatment Center for First Nations people. It was there that I went to a Sweatlodge ceremony. It was explained to me that it was like going into the mother's womb again. I really benefited from this ceremony.

I went in thinking about being reborn again. I was given another opportunity to get a new start to life. In the sweat an image came to me of my dead grandfather. He told me to keep going with life and not toward death like many of our people were doing. That stuck with me and helped me to stay away from drugs and alcohol for 10 years straight. Seeing that image of my grandfather stuck with me.

The smudge helped me because whenever I smudge I feel centered and grounded. When wild things happen in my life I get ungrounded very easily and need to get grounded with a smudge.

Other times going to the sweatlodge helped me with not drinking. Being encased in darkness with the heat and the sound of the drum made me feel like I was being held without really being held by anyone. It made me feel like being an infant again and seeing things like a child rather than someone who has been through a lot of horrible things. Coming out and cleaning in cold water was like rebirth. This is concrete and not really part of the thought process. It gives me comfort and security. The experience of the sweat stays with me and comforts me.

Sweats are an intense powerful healing method for me. It's cleansing and it opens my mind. I tend to shut off my mind but when I was in a sweat the visions that I saw and what I heard opened me up so that my whole world was wide open. I walked out a lighter person and whatever burdens I had weren't there any more or if they were there they weren't as heavy anymore. When it expands you it connects you with the spiritual world. It opened me up to a spiritual dimension. The process of bringing the rocks and water into the sweat is peaceful and calming. It's also like I was the only one there, it doesn't matter how many people are actually in the sweat. I was the only one there in connection with the spirits.

### *Setting Goals (15 incidents)*

This self-explanatory category is distinct from involvement in challenging activities in that the goal need not be difficult or self-directed. Examples ranged from setting career goals to goals of improving one aspect of the person's life. Before setting goals, many reported feeling depressed and powerless because of lack of options and direction. The action of setting a goal resulted in participants feeling more optimistic and empowered.

#### *Examples*

Having established some career goals helped me in my healing. Making the plans was something that I could do for myself and that made me feel good. It was like respecting myself. This got me out of drinking and got me thinking about the future. I started sleeping better because I knew I had something to work towards. I started looking after myself better physically.

I have the goal to set up my own shop and that has really helped me. Having that goal has given me the feeling that I have an alternative to the job I'm doing now. This gives me a sense of confidence and takes away some of my anxiety.

### *Helping Others (21 incidents)*

This category includes any form of the participant helping another person, ranging from volunteering with a First Nations organization to helping someone to get home safely. This category is distinct from obtaining help/support from others. The concept of helping others or of community service is a traditional value among many First Nations cultures and is seen as a healthy activity. Participants reported that they felt empowered through this activity.

### *Examples*

I received a general message from my Elders that I should go beyond myself to help others with their healing. In doing this I helped myself because I felt that I could do something useful and it helped me to not worry as much about my own problems.

### *Gaining an Understanding of the Problem (22 incidents)*

In this category individuals obtained an understanding of their problem by learning to identify, clarify, and make sense of the problem. This category is distinct from simply obtaining help from others because it focuses specifically on identification and understanding of the problem as opposed to a more general category of obtaining help from others. Incidents ranged from gaining understanding through dreams to obtaining understanding through a treatment program. Participants reported that understanding their problem was empowering because it gave them optimism and self-confidence to deal with it.

### *Examples*

I was involved in a women's survivors of family violence group. It was really good as I learned a lot about the cycle of violence and the roles that people play. To be with other women and to learn where they are at really helped me to see where I was at. That was a powerful experience to be in that group and it gave me power. I knew that I could start to do something about my problem.

Reading this book called *The Grieving Indian* helped me because it put into perspective what I had been going through. It helped me to understand the stages of grieving and where I was. It explained the separation and the impact and the losses. It helped me to understand the loneliness I felt from being separated and from the later withdrawal. In understanding it I was able to start dealing with it.

### *Establishing a Spiritual Connection (34 incidents)*

This category encompassed prayer and other forms of connection and communication with the Creator, Great Spirit, God. This category did not include participation in ceremony but focused more specifically on the spiritual connectedness. Spirituality was identified as an important component in First Nations healing. Many participants pointed out that they could not heal until they developed the spiritual dimension of themselves. The concept of balance was mentioned as it pertains to keeping the various parts of the self equal and in balance. For many participants it was necessary to develop the spiritual dimension of themselves to attain the necessary balance with the physical, mental, and emotional side.

### *Examples*

I go to high spots to help with my healing. This past summer in an outdoor job, I had planned to bring my kids to be with me but I didn't know if I could do it. To calm my doubts I climbed this mountain and sat up there and prayed and things became clearer. I was able to see through some of the problems that I didn't think could be solved. Sitting up there thinking things through helped me to come up with a game plan. Being on the mountain and connecting spiritually helped me to see farther. When I can physically see farther it helps me to see farther within myself.

I guess what helped me the most was learning about Native spirituality. I was raised with the Catholic faith but it did not fulfill my spiritual needs. All of the ceremonies and teachings I received helped me to get in touch with my spiritual side because this is the way that Native people develop their spirituality. Spiritually I was dead before that. I would never have finished University without this reconnection.

### *Learning From a Role Model (16 incidents)*

In this category the participant obtained guidance, instruction, or example from someone whom he or she had established as a role model. The role model is someone specifically chosen as such and therefore is distinguished from the person who helps in the more general category of obtaining help from others. Examples ranged from learning from others who were successfully coping with similar problems, to following the example of a respected Elder.

#### *Examples*

I always used my grandmother as a model in coping with problems because I felt that she was strong and she was independent and I could use her as a role model. If she could do it then I would do it too.

This old woman helped me because she was so strong in her faith. She seemed so patient to others and kind. I didn't have those qualities in my own life because of what had happened to me. Her example got me to relearn to be a human being again. A human being has trust for others and accepts others. She was a role model for me because she was like I wanted to be.

### *Establishing a Connection with Nature (72 incidents)*

This category includes being in or with nature and using the natural world for self-healing. This category does not focus on spiritual connection but on the many ways that nature is used. For many First Nations people a spiritual connection exists between nature and humans in that humans are seen as part of nature. All of creation is seen as being equal and part of the whole and is therefore equal in the eyes of the Creator. Some participants reported feeling farther away from creation and the Creator because of the influence of living in the mechanistic, material world of the city. Connection with nature was sometimes seen as getting back to creation and the Creator. Many of the incidents obtained could overlap with Establishing a spiritual connection, but were chosen because they specifically dealt with nature. Examples ranged from the use of water in healing to the healing benefits of being among trees in the forest. This is a large category, perhaps indicating the significance First Nations people place on the role of nature in healing. Nature helped participants to feel relaxed, cleansed, calmed, and stronger.

#### *Examples*

Something that helped me was the noise of the water. Rivers slow me down. I can sit and go the same pace as the river and enjoy it and the sound. In the ocean it's the sound of the waves hitting the boat. Those noises are much more relaxing than the noises in the city. The water helped to calm me inside and it gave me strength.

The thing that helped a lot was water. I would go to the river or to the lake or something. I would just sit by the river and watch the water flow. The water was continuously flowing whatever happened even if there was a snag or something it would just flow around it. If a rock was sticking out of the surface the water would flow around it. It made me feel that's how I should be and that I should carry on.

With bad feelings the wind would help. It felt like the wind just blew them away. It just dissipated because it felt like creation was so big it would just disappear and be absorbed. It was like the whole of creation was absorbing my bad feelings. The wind could take away my problems only if I threw them into the wind. In my mind I had gathered problems and feelings up and threw them into the wind. If you don't throw them up into the wind it won't work.

I used to take a walk in the bush where it was isolated. During the time that I was depressed I would walk along the power lines behind my village. One day I was sitting in a favorite spot there thinking about what I should do about the pain that I am carrying around when just then a bear came crashing out of the bush, crossed the clearing, and went crashing back into the bush on the other side. When I walk through the bush it is really tangled and tough to walk through. Watching the bear encouraged me to go straight forward and not be afraid of sobriety. At that time everybody else was poking fun at me and saying that I must have thought I was better than them because I stopped drinking. Thinking and acting like that bear taught me that it was OK to take big steps. This helped me to feel a lot better about not using alcohol but in finding straighter paths to deal with my problem. My grandfather's guardian spirits were the wolf and the bear and I think that they are for me now too.

Nature helps me in healing. I go where there are trees. I've gone to the middle of Stanley Park where it's quiet and I can absorb my surroundings. It makes me feel part of reality. When I'm in the middle of all the cement everything seems unreal. I feel I'm a spectator instead of a participant. When I am in nature I feel like I am a part of my existence of being. I feel like I'm absorbing everything and everything is absorbing me and I'm a part of it.

I used to go out to the woods and walk up a hill. From being around all of that nature my spirit used to get soothed to the point that nothing could bother me, because it's so calm you can hear all of the life in the woods and it's all peaceful and soothes my inside.

### *Validation of the Categories*

In developing a scheme of categories it is important to determine if the category scheme developed is one that can be used confidently. Are the categories sound and are they trustworthy? The question of validity of the categories concerns the extent to which the categories are sound or well founded. Although it is not possible to attain absolute certainty as to the soundness and trustworthiness of any category scheme, it is necessary to ensure that the category scheme is reasonably certain if it is to be used in practice. The user must be assured that the incidents gathered and the categories formed are not incomplete, inaccurate, or impractical. Several measures have been taken by the researcher to assure the user of an acceptable level of soundness and trustworthiness.

### *Reliability of Categorizing Incidents*

A good indication of trustworthiness is reliability. According to Andersson and Nilsson (1964), one way to determine reliability is by the

degree of agreement of independent judges using the category scheme. Can different people use the categories in a consistent way? The relevant statistic for such a test is percentage agreement. Flanagan (1954) suggested that a category scheme should attain a score exceeding 75% agreement. In this study a sample of 54 incidents were drawn from the pool of 457. The sample size of 54 was used because it represented 4 incidents from each of the 14 categories. This sample size also constituted approximately 10% of the incidents reported. A smaller sample size of 2 incidents was used for the category Self-care because of the small number of incidents in this category.

The two independent judges who participated in this procedure were doctoral students in the Department of Counseling Psychology at the University of British Columbia. The judges were given a brief description of the categories by the researcher and asked to place the random sample of 54 incidents in the categories. The incidents provided to the judges were typed on 54 separate index cards. The judges were directed to place the incidents in the categories that they felt were most appropriate. Both judges took approximately 45 minutes to place the incidents. Table 1 represents the percentage of agreement between the researcher's and the judges' placement of incidents in the category scheme.

To make best use of the results, the researcher conducted an interview with the second judge who did not attain 100% agreement to determine if the reasons warranted changes in the category scheme. An examination of the four incidents incorrectly placed by the second judge revealed that the judge had focused on a trigger word without focusing on the whole incident. This inconsistency can be attributed to haste and as such does not warrant changes to the category scheme.

The high percentage agreement obtained by the independent judges means that other people can use the categories to categorize incidents in a consistent or reliable way.

*Comprehensiveness of Categories*

An important way of determining the soundness of a category scheme is to determine whether the category scheme is reasonably complete or comprehensive (Andersson & Nilsson, 1964). One test used to check for comprehensiveness or completeness in this study involved the procedure of withholding 50 incidents (approximately 10%) until the categories had

*Table 1. Reliability of Category Schemes*

Judges	Percentage agreement
Doctoral student #1	100%
Doctoral student #2	92%
Average interrater reliability	96%



been formed. When category formation was finished, the withheld incidents were then brought back and classified. All withheld incidents were easily placed within the categories. Were this not the case, it would have been necessary to form new categories until all of the withheld incidents had been placed. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that the categories are provisionally comprehensive. It is necessary to make this claim provisional because there is always the possibility that a new category could be discovered.

### *Participation Rate for Categories*

Another method to determine whether a category is sound or well founded is to examine the level of agreement among the participants in the study in reporting the same thing. To form a category the researcher must identify a significant similarity among a group of incidents reported by different people. Participants independently report the same kind of event. If only one person or a few persons report a category of event, it might be dismissed. For example, one person might distort or fabricate an event. However, when many people report the same kind of event, such possibilities as distortion or fabrication begin to lose force. Agreement among independent observers is an important test of soundness. Agreement is gauged by the participation rate for each category (the number of participants reporting a category of events divided by the total number of participants; see Table 2). The categories with the highest participation rate are therefore those with the highest level of agreement. The participation rates ranged from a low of 6% (Self-care) to a high of 70% (Expressing oneself). Other categories with a participation rate of 50% or higher are: Anchoring self in tradition, Obtaining help/support from others, Participation in ceremony, and Establishing connection with nature. Although most categories received a high participation rate, the category of Self-care had a low participation rate of 6%. Though only three people reported events in this category, the category is not necessarily ill founded. When this event was reexamined to see if the incidents in the category could fit elsewhere, it was determined that the category should be preserved because of the vividness and clarity of events. The incidents and the category were sufficiently clear and distinct to remain intact.

### *Expert Commentary*

Another test for soundness used in this study was expert validation. This analysis puts research into the context of the field by asking experts in the field to determine whether these categories are valid and useful to them. Experts are asked to bring their relevant experience to bear (Cronbach, 1971) by explaining whether the findings of a particular study are consistent with what they have found from their own experience. Expert validation is an important test for soundness because experts have experience witnessing events that the average person would not see. Experts can

*Table 2. Participation Rate in Each category*

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Participation Rate</i>
Established social connection	8	16%
Anchoring self in tradition	25	50%
Exercise	16	32%
Self-care	3	6%
Involvement in challenging activities	6	12%
Expressing oneself	35	70%
Obtained help/support from others	32	64%
Participation in ceremony	25	50%
Setting goals	12	24%
Helping others	15	30%
Gaining an understanding of the problem	19	38%
Establishing spiritual connection	18	36%
Learning from a role model	11	22%
Establishing a connection with nature	33	66%

*n*=50.

Note. Frequency indicates the number of participants reporting an incident in a category, whereas participation rate indicates the percentage of participants reporting an incident in a category.

provide collaborative evidence and content validity to the results of an investigation. In this study the researcher asked two First Nations mental health professionals who are considered experts at helping First Nations people with mental healing to determine whether these categories are useful to them. Both possessed master's degrees in the helping professions and had approximately 25 years' combined experience in facilitating healing for First Nations people in British Columbia. The researcher conducted an interview with each of the two experts and after describing each of the categories, asked them to go through each category and assess their usefulness. The instructions were simply to consider each category and state whether they had used the category to facilitate healing and if so, comment on its usefulness. The results of interviews with experts confirmed that each of the 14 categories in the category scheme were useful and valid to their practices. Comments made by these experts conveyed the message that all of these categories can lead to healing and have been used at one time or another by them to facilitate healing. Comments made to me by the experts such as "this is the way the Elders taught us" and "we must never lose our connection with Mother Earth" reinforced the significance of the healing approaches described by the participants. This analysis adds further strength to the soundness or validity of the categories and the category scheme.

*Support of Related Literature*

Another method used to check for the soundness of the categories is agreement with previous research. If a category disagreed with previous research, there would be good reason to question its validity. It could not be automatically dismissed, but it would be more questionable because it contradicted prior evidence from other studies. If a category of event agreed with previous research, there would be good reason to be more confident that it is sound. If a category of event was novel, neither confirmed nor unconfirmed by previous research, it would stand alone as a possibility to be confirmed or not by future research. To assess agreement, the categories formed were compared with previous research and informed opinion. In this analysis 12 of the 14 categories agreed with previous research and informed opinion. This finding can therefore increase our confidence that these categories are well founded. As no mention could be found for the remaining two novel categories (self-care and helping others), they stand alone as a possibility to be confirmed or not by future research. Reference to relevant research and informed opinion for the 12 supported categories are as follows.

*Established Social Connection*

Becoming socially connected with other people is one of the keys to healing for First Nations people. Lafromboise et al. (1990) state, "It is clear that the role of therapy in traditional American Indian society has been to reaffirm cultural values and consider the individual in the context of the community" (p. 633).

Seeing the individual in the context of the community is an important concept in First Nations world view as it pertains to healing. Western psychology often strives to strengthen the client as an individual, whereas First Nations psychology encourages the client to transcend the self for the purpose of becoming connected to the people and world beyond the self (Katz & Rolde, 1981). One of the goals of healing must therefore be to establish and maintain a social connection with others.

*Anchoring Oneself in Tradition*

This category is also supported by other studies in the literature. Anderson (1993) found that personal and cultural identity is an important theme in the foundation of a culturally sensitive counseling framework for First Nations people. For over 100 years the majority culture attempted to separate First Nations people from their culture and traditions. Understandably, this action has adversely affected the cultural identity of generations of First Nations people.

Many American Indians attribute their psychological or physical problems to human weaknesses and the propensity to avoid the personal discipline necessary for the maintenance of cultural values and human respect. (Lafromboise et al., 1990, p. 630)

Those who have found the strength and discipline to become reconnected and anchored in tradition and culture have found it an effective path to healing.

### *Exercise*

Exercise is mentioned in the context of the Medicine Wheel model, which stresses the importance of keeping the physical dimension of the self in balance (Bopp et al., 1984). In a broader context exercise is seen as facilitative to healing, particularly pertaining to its role in the reduction of stress (Long & Flood, 1993).

### *Involvement in Challenging Activities*

Many of the ceremonies and rituals described by McGaa (1989) in his book on Native American healing mention the beneficial effects of challenging the self by exercising patience and self-discipline. These are challenging activities that reward the person with improved self-esteem and mental health. In a different cultural context, this finding is similar to studies showing the psychological benefits derived from self-encounter and self-challenge (Reser & Soherl, 1988).

### *Expressing Oneself*

The ability to express oneself and to do so symbolically is something that First Nations people have maintained (Hammerschlag, 1993). It might seem strange to a non-Aboriginal person to believe that healing can occur by going into the forest to cry or scream, but many First Nations use techniques such as this because they recognize the need to cleanse themselves of bad emotions. This is also included in the traditional teachings of the Medicine Wheel. The Medicine Wheel stresses the need to keep the emotional self in balance (Bopp et al., 1984). Western counseling is also finding that the psychological and physiological effects of the expression of emotion are a key element for change (Hess & Kapas, 1992; Moreno, 1946).

### *Obtaining Help/Support From Others*

The theme of obtaining help/support from others is prominent in the literature. Lafromboise et al. (1990) state:

When problems arise in Indian communities they become not only problems of the individual but problems of the community. The family, kin, and friends coalesce into an interlocking framework to observe the individual, find comprehensible reasons for the individual's behavior, draw the individual out of isolation, and integrate the individual back into the social life of the group. (p. 630)

This approach to healing ensures that individuals need not cope with their problems alone but do so with the help of friends, extended family, and community. Ross (1992) mentions the following value as an aspect of First Nations culture that should not only survive, but should be adopted by the majority culture: "An insistence on family and community responsibil-

ity for the mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health of each member" (p. 98).

### *Participation in Ceremony*

Healing through participation in ceremony has frequently been mentioned in the literature. In reflecting on the importance of ceremony and ritual Hammerschlag (1993) states:

The enduring gift of Native Americans is the importance of ritual. They invest our lives with meaning. They illuminate and ultimately define our realities because they mark the milestones by which we define ourselves as individuals and participants in a community.

One of the more prominent ceremonies or rituals described in the healing literature is the Sweatlodge ceremony. This ceremony is often considered to be a cleansing or rebirthing ceremony. Elements of this ceremony such as the darkness and the drumbeat are likened to the experience of being in the womb of Mother Earth. The process of sweating can represent the intermingling of the participant's life fluids with Mother Earth's. Powerful images such as these help to facilitate healing for those who participate in the Sweatlodge ceremony and other First Nations ceremonies.

### *Setting Goals*

Setting goals was stressed in the literature concerning the Medicine Wheel. The Medicine Wheel is considered a framework for stressing the development of goals (Bopp et al., 1989). The process of setting goals is seen as an important step in most counseling approaches. In a broader sense, goals can have a motivational, educational, and evaluative function in the counseling process (Cormier & Hackney, 1987).

### *Gaining an Understanding of the Problem*

The act of naming what is wrong with a person has a therapeutic and healing effect for the person (Torrey, 1972). Understanding relieves anxiety and provides a person with hope that he or she can deal with the problems.

### *Establishing a Spiritual Connection*

Healing through establishing a spiritual connection was mentioned in the research literature. As Dugan (1985) states, "It is to the great spirit, perceived everywhere, that the Indian turns to in times of need" (p. 93). The inclusion of spirituality in the process of healing adds that fourth element to the human dimension that is often neglected in Western counseling, which tends to focus only on the mental, physical, and emotional. For First Nations people spirituality is seen as a universal aspect to healing that overlaps with all dimensions of everyday life.

Spirituality or holiness is seen as the essence of healing for Native people. This means to manifest wholeness in spirit and bring it into our bodies, our families, our communities and our world. (Medicine Eagle, 1989. p. 60)

### *Learning From a Role Model*

Role modeling is seen as one of the themes that form the foundation for a culturally sensitive counseling framework as suggested by Anderson (1993). The Western practice of mentoring also draws strongly on the principle of role modeling as an important component in mentoring others.

### *Establishing a Connection with Nature*

The First Nations philosophy concerning nature has traditionally been one of accommodation and respect. In talking of the majority culture's relationship to nature Ross (1992) states, "We must modify our insistence of manipulation and mastery in the direction of accommodation and respect" (p. 67). In respecting nature, First Nations people see nature as providing a blueprint of how to live a healthy life. Nature is another important resource in the facilitation of healing for First Nations people.

In summary, the tests employed in this study support the soundness and trustworthiness of the category system. It is therefore possible to say that the categories can be used confidently. Soundness and trustworthiness were supported by virtue of a high percentage of agreement obtained by independent judges in using the category scheme to consistently place the incidents. The soundness of the category scheme was also supported by the test of introducing withheld incidents to the established scheme. This test of comprehensiveness or completeness did not result in any new categories being formed, thereby supporting the soundness of the category scheme. The soundness and trustworthiness of the categories was also supported by testing the participation rate, validation by experts, and the agreement of previous literature. The participation rate was determined by checking for the agreement among the participants in reporting the same thing. In all categories a number of participants reported the same thing, with five categories showing a participation rate of 50% or higher. Expert validation was obtained when two First Nations mental health experts were able to report that all 14 categories would be valid and useful to them in their work. An examination of related literature demonstrated that 12 of the 14 categories dovetailed with other research found in the literature. This agreement of previous literature also supports the soundness of the categories.

### *Examination of the Outcomes*

This study addresses the question of what has facilitated healing for the First Nations people of British Columbia. The focus has been on what was done to facilitate healing. Participants in the study provided 437 critical incidents of what was done and what action was taken to facilitate healing.



A scheme of categories was established to organize these data so that they could be of use to both theorists and practitioners. In this section I briefly discuss the outcomes or results of those actions taken to facilitate healing. The reason for examining outcomes along with the facilitating events is to attempt to discern a general trend concerning the beliefs about healing held by First Nations people. From an ethnopsychiatric perspective, knowledge of these beliefs is an essential key to understanding what is apt to work in facilitating healing for any group of people. To be an effective healer, one must share some of the person's world view, especially the part that concerns illness and healing (Torrey, 1972). By examining the sorts of things that people stressed in the 437 events, and by organizing these outcomes into categories, it has been possible to construct a framework of principles or beliefs held by the First Nations people of British Columbia concerning healing. Five categories have emerged as a result of this process. It should be noted that these categories are not conclusive findings of the study, but are still exploratory and serve only to provide a tentative organization of the outcomes. There is, therefore, a certain degree of overlap between the categories. These five categories are presented by providing a brief description of the category and an indication of the type of events within each category.

#### *Empowerment (227 incidents)*

This large category refers to the individual being empowered in some way. This category includes outcomes in which the person was provided with optimism, motivation, strength, self-confidence, self-respect, self-esteem, in which he or she was assisted in helping to solve a problem. Empowerment is brought about by the participant obtaining strength or a sense of power through his or her own actions or the actions of others.

#### *Examples*

When I do something for someone else it makes me feel good because it gives me power.

I was recognized by another clan because of the service I provided to them. This was a tremendous honor and really did something for me. To be held in such esteem by another group of people was good for my self-esteem.

The counselor taught me how to make my own decisions. He didn't tell me what to do but told me what my options were and I had to make the decisions. This gave me more personal power than I had before.

#### *Cleansing (72 incidents)*

This category refers to eliminating or getting rid of bad energy, spirits, or emotions and includes outcomes such as elimination, purging, relieving pressure, and releasing emotions. Cleansing can occur through a wide variety of means and can apply to physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual cleansing. Often what leads to cleansing is the expression of emotion such as pain, anger, or fear. Belief in the healing powers of cleansing are prevalent among First Nations people, but this belief is not

prominent in Western approaches to healing and can therefore be considered an important contribution of First Nations culture. Much of the practice of cleansing for First Nations people is expressed in a symbolic way and may not be clearly visible or understood by non-Native people.

### *Examples*

I cleanse myself with water. In my culture you cleanse yourself with water, your eyes, your face, your ears, your hands. Instead of going to the river you can go to a tap and use the cold water and cleanse yourself. You would say prayers while you are doing this as it is a thank you for all that we are given. I have done this regularly like praying and it has helped me to be strong and to heal.

Bathing helped me because it was a cleansing time. Whatever it was that I wanted removed I could cover my body with mud or sand and then go into the river and wash it away. I did this for a month. This helped because I had to put a name to what it was that I wanted to get rid of and then washed it away. The physical washing affected the emotional and spiritual by washing and cleansing them as well. I would do this bathing the first thing before the sun was up and the last thing before the sun was down. In the city I can do this by washing with just water from the tap.

We had to tell our story over and over again because of all the different groups we were in. Each and every time that I told my story I remembered something else and then that comes out and I can deal with it. It was slowly cleansing to keep telling my story.

I sit by the water when I'm really upset. The river behind our house was really rough. I imagined the troubled water just taking all of my problems away. The rougher the water the calmer I felt because it pulls the problems away faster.

### *Balance (105 incidents)*

This category refers to having attained balance in one's life. This category includes outcomes such as attaining harmony, centering, and grounding of oneself. The individual attained perspective, meaning in their life, calmness, or peacefulness. The individual may also have managed to develop a certain part of himself or herself such as the emotional or spiritual dimension. Balance is an important concept presented in the First Nations model of the Medicine Wheel; it is thought that to live life in a healthy way a person must keep the four parts of the self in balance. It is like the four legs of a table: If a table has only three legs instead of four, or has one or more legs that are shorter than the others, it will wobble and will be unable to support any weight. Similarly, if a person's physical, spiritual, mental, or emotional dimension of the self missing or undeveloped, then he or she too will not be able to function properly. This belief is not prominent in Western approaches to healing but could be considered an important contribution of First Nations knowledge. The following examples illustrate some of the ways in which participants attained such balance.

### *Examples*

I have obtained balance by looking at creation. Forests, for example, are very important in my healing because they have everything and they are all interconnected. There are all different elements but they are living in harmony and are interconnected. So many parts of myself have been like loose ends going off in different directions. To be able to bring all of

these things together has been very important to me. I am striving for this more within myself. Plants don't grow exactly side by side but it all fits and it all works. I am learning to keep the parts of myself in balance.

I took a program at College that helped me to realize what my career/life options were and that I could start to take care of myself. I learned that I could also look after myself in a balanced way. I became more in tune with my body and my emotions. I realized the balance and the connection between my emotional state and my physical state. Physical symptoms became warnings that I wasn't attending to emotional problems. This realization was very helpful to me in my healing.

### *Discipline (11 incidents)*

Through obtaining and exercising discipline, participants reported that they were more in control of their lives. Participants felt more self-control and felt proud of their accomplishments in obtaining discipline. This provided people with optimism and confidence in their abilities to deal with future problems. Although discipline was often represented as physical challenge, it was also manifested in spiritual, mental, and emotional ways. This concept of discipline as a key to healthy living has been a traditional value of First Nations people in the past and may eventually gain greater recognition as healing for contemporary people as well.

### *Examples*

Exercise in general helps a lot because it teaches you about dealing with problems the right way. Exercise is hard and dealing with problems is hard. There are steps on how to do them but sometimes I would get caught up in doing them the wrong way and not get anything out of them. I had to learn to do exercise right and this taught me to deal with problems properly. I guess what I learned was discipline in dealing with things.

Cold water helped me a lot either by swimming in a cold river or by using cold water at the end of a shower. It teaches a person discipline and it also brings things to base existence and calms me. It's like it helps me face the cold hard facts. It would remind me that I was the only one who could make the decision not to drink. No one else is going to be able to stop me. Cold water grounds me and reminds me of my responsibility.

Fasting—not eating for 24 hours—has helped me. This is when it is combined with lots of prayer. I'm not exactly sure why it works but it does work. Church leaders have told me that if you fast, whatever you are praying for will happen if it is a worthwhile cause. It has added strength to my request and helped me to be more spiritually disciplined.

### *Belonging (22 incidents)*

In this category the person achieved a sense of belonging or connectedness to something or someone. This category includes outcomes such as belonging to family, community, culture, traditions, and all of creation. This desired outcome illustrates the collective orientation of many First Nations people. The extended family, friends, and members of the community are seen as a natural support for First Nations people and illustrate the importance of belonging. Similarly, it is seen as desirable for many First Nations people to be connected or to belong with nature and with spirituality, and ultimately to be a part of and belong to all of creation. This belief touches on a broader cultural issue for First Nations people because

of the historical events of the past 200 years. The federal government's policy of assimilation has had devastating effects on the unity and sense of belonging for the First Nations people of Canada. The government and church were successful at separating First Nations people from their culture, language, religion, families, communities, and land. First Nations people have recognized the overwhelming need to be reconnected and to reclaim what was taken and are now acting to reconnect and strengthen those bonds

### *Examples*

Getting together with my birth Mom was healing in knowing who my people are and knowing where I belong and who my relations are. It's been healing in that I belong somewhere. Belonging in a family and community has been very healing because in the non-Native environment I didn't belong. I can be proud of who I am as a Native person and everything that we have gone through. Despite our differences we are still family and we are still strong. I ran away when I was 6 and my adopted family said that I should wait until I graduated and then they would help me to find my birth family. They did help me but it was three years after graduation before I was ready to have them help me.

Getting in touch with my culture has really helped in healing. It has given me a sense of belonging to something, a purpose.

Based on the results of this analysis we can say that an effective healing program for First Nations people would invoke empowerment, elimination, balance, discipline, and belonging.

### *Summary*

In response to the question addressed to First Nations people of British Columbia: What facilitates healing for you? participants responded with 437 critical incidents. The 437 critical incidents were organized into 14 categories that are described in this chapter. Tests were employed in the study to support the soundness and trustworthiness of the category system. It was determined that the category system can be used confidently. Finally, a framework of healing beliefs was provided based on an analysis of the healing outcomes of the critical incidents.