

GENOCIDE AND SUICIDE AMONG INDIGENOUS PEOPLE: THE NORTH MEETS THE SOUTH

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Abstract / Résumé

Indigenous people around the world have staggering rates of suicide, especially among the young, despite low rates in the past. This paper presents reflections of the people themselves from the Arctic and Australia, giving voice to the shared malaise. The narrative accounts show great similarities. The high rates of suicide are associated with genocide, including what is called cultural genocide, in both regions. Indigenous people are now developing traditional approaches to healing using their culture as the primary vehicle to their wellness.

Les peuples indigènes, à travers le monde, présentaient auparavant un faible taux de suicide; il est désormais stupéfiant, surtout parmi les jeunes. Cet article propose les réflexions des habitants d'Australie et des régions arctiques, dans lesquelles s'exprime un malaise partagé. Les récits comportent de nombreuses similitudes. Les taux élevés de suicide se rattachent étroitement au génocide, incluant ce qu'on appelle le génocide culturel, dans les deux régions. Aujourd'hui, les indigènes développent des approches traditionnelles pour remédier à ce problème; ils utilisent ainsi leur culture comme véhicule principal à leur bien-être.

They lived here since the world began. They are the Indigenous people, or more accurately, just people of the world. They lived in the North, the South and all corners of the world. They were a prosperous, active, adaptive people, attuned to the land. The land was sacred; until, as told in prophecies, the White invaders came. The invaders—or settlers as they called themselves—came to take the land and to destroy the people as a race. Cultural genocide, sometimes genocide, was the intent.

The Indigenous people were then, and even now, treated as primitive, passive, and dependent people, a race with no contribution to the world (see the opposite view, for example, in Jenness, 1922). This view was paradoxical because the world was not only sacred to them, but their ancestors. The invaders saw the “natives” as needing to be assimilated into their superior race. The settlers’ real intent was for these people not to exist because they wanted to take the land and wealth. Genocide by the colonialists was not rare during those years worldwide as, for an example, the potato famine intentionally perpetrated by the English on the Irish, beginning in 1845, shows (Mullen, 1997). Queen Elizabeth, King Ferdinand, Queen Victoria, King Louis, and so on were the “Adolf Hitler’s” of their day. “Auschwitz” was an everyday reality for many people across the world during the years of colonialism and the years that followed.

Subsequently, the Indigenous people suffered unbearable pain, many dying from the traumatic aftershocks. Suicide became an escape, the only solution for some. Yet, of late, these proud Indigenous people are giving voice to their pain. It was, in fact, prophesized that this time of healing would come (Connors, 1995). It is within this socio-historical context that we tell the story of the North meeting the South. Our intent is to remind all of us that we are all just people, whether in the North or South, an archetypical aim of suicide prevention (Shneidman, 1985).

A Personal Frame

Suicide is a common problem among Indigenous people across the world. Historically it was much less common. This is true in the North and South. Lucien Taparti (1998), a recently deceased Elder, from the Arctic, stated:

In the past we hardly used to hear of suicides in our communities and would hear of them every so often only... Only once in a blue moon you’d hear of suicides in one of the communities. But nowadays, in one year there would be quite a few suicides (p.xi).

The same is true in the South. Polly Sumner-Dodd (1997), a well respected Aborigine, stated: "Suicide was not known in traditional Aboriginal society." She notes that today, as in the North, suicide is common in Australia. She adds:

The incidence of suicide prevailing unveils to us a landscape of unhealed wounds, a reluctance or even lethargy to seek therapeutic intervention, the availability of Aboriginal appropriate treatment regimes and the failure of institutions, such as the family, health and welfare support services and custodial centres in their duty to care.

The same is true in the North, leading Lucien Taparti (1998) to conclude:

It's hard to grasp the problem. I feel we should look for solutions and start giving this matter more consideration/attention (p.xi).

This is the intent here: to give voice to the malaise in the North and South.

Suicide issues are complex. No one person, especially a non-Native, can know all about suicide among Indigenous people. Only recently have Native people been utilized as credible informants about the event (Hunter, 1991a; Kral, Arnakaq, Ekho, Kunuk, Ootoova, Papatsie and Taparti, 1998; Leenaars, 1995), and therefore, this paper is written by Native authors (and one non-Native) from two groups of people, the Inuit in the Arctic and the Aborigines in Australia, each of whom has been able to reflect on the issues in their own people. We recognize that we do not represent all Indigenous people or even the Inuit and Aborigines. Yet, we hope that our perspectives will cast a wider net over the shared issues than one view in isolation. One perspective, especially non-Native, on suicide among Indigenous people would be myopic.

By way of a personal history, maybe a short story of how the North met the South, will assist, a story that came to us by no coincidence. The authors from the North (Canada), Jack Anawak, Antoon Leenaars and Lucien Taparti had been invited to give a keynote address at a global meeting of suicidologists in Adelaide, Australia (March 23-27, 1997). We spoke about "Suicide Among the Canadian Inuit" and there met Trish Hill-Keddie. We spoke, shared and learned how much the Indigenous people had in common. Next, as the senior author (AL) had done in his travels in the North (Leenaars, 1995), he was invited to communities of Aboriginal people in Australia. We travelled to Wreck Bay, a beautiful community situated on a sacred beach near Canberra and we met Colleen Brown. Once more, we shared and learned about the commonalities of the malaise in the North and South.

Thus, we hope, with at least two perspectives on the topic, from two different groups of Indigenous people, one from the North and the other from the South, that we can come to a closer approximation of understanding the complexities of suicide among Indigenous people. We hope that it will aid not only in the understanding of people but the healing of all people.

Epidemiology and the North-South Scene

The Indigenous people lived here since the world began (Ray, 1996). They have been bonded to the earth since the beginning of time. The earth and the people are one. Stories by the people, in fact, tell of generations living in both the South and North.

White scientists have suggested that Inuit and Aborigines migrated from Eurasia. The Inuit, we were told, crossed the Bering Strait from northern Asia and the Aborigine crossed over an Indonesia land bridge from southeast Asia. Early estimates were that people came to Canada about 12,000 years ago. The estimates for the Aborigines in Australia were the same. Estimates later changed to 30,000 years ago in the Arctic and 40,000 years ago in Australia. Some believe that it may have been actually over 100,000 years ago. The people, however, know that they have always been on earth. This is what "Dreamtime," Aborigine stories in the South and "Unikkaartuit," Inuit stories in the North tell. Regardless of one's perspective, the people lived essentially in harmony with the land for a long time, until the invaders came.

Epidemiology is the study of the incidence, distribution and determinants of a disease or an event, such as suicide (see Durkheim, 1897). There are few early observations about suicide in either the North or South, although it appears that the reports on the rates of suicide in these two regions differed. Early records on suicide suggest epidemic levels in the Arctic, whereas in Australia, very low rates were recorded at the turn of the century. Older records from the people themselves indicate that suicide was very rare in either the South or the North.

Weyer (1932/1962) was one of the first to state that suicide was a cultural trait of the Inuit (although he called them "Eskimos"). Boas (1964) concurred that suicide was not rare. These observers discussed suicide as a way of life of the Inuit, documenting, for example, cases of "altruistic" suicide. They noted that suicide, among the elderly, disabled, and sick, was often undertaken to preserve the group. However, although suicide in the elderly, for example, occurred, Weyer and Boas may have exaggerated their reports, loosely collecting data from diverse events, not only self-inflicted death (Kirmayer, Fletcher and Boothroyd, 1998). Even more so,

youth suicide was very scarce in the old ways, but not so today (Kirmayer, 1994; Kirmayer, Fletcher, and Boothroyd, 1998).

The records report a different scene in Australia. In Australia, early commentators noted that suicide was quite scarce among Indigenous groups (Moodie, 1973). Cawte (1964) concluded, in fact, that suicide was "almost unheard of". Moodie (1973) cites a rate of 3 per 100,000, compared to around 12 per 100,000 in the general population of Australia. As in the North, despite limitations (e.g., events being recorded in specific communities only), suicide in the young was rarely recorded (Hunter, 1991a, 1991b; Reser, 1989a). Yet, as Reser (1989a) has concluded in Australia it is "erroneous to equate low incidences with non-existence." This conclusion can be transposed to Canada. It is often erroneous to equate observed with actual incidence of suicide in both countries (Kosky, Eshkevarit, Goldney and Hasson, 1998; Leenaars, Wenckstern, Sakinofsky, Dyck, Kral and Bland, 1998).

Today, the rates are quite different than the past. Suicide rates in the North and South have increased dramatically in the last 30 years. Reser (1989a, 1989b) in Australia reports "epidemic" rates. He quotes rates as high as 60 per 100,000, which is six times the general population. Other rates reported, however, are as low as 17.5 per 100,000. Reser and others have made special note of suicide among Aborigine in custody with rates of 131 per 100,000 (Reser, 1989b) (and this higher rate in Indigenous people in custody is equally true in Canada). The rates of suicide among the young, especially among males, are especially high. No sound data on attempts exist in Australia, although research is currently being undertaken.

Canada's North has equally high rates of suicide. Abbey, Hood, Young and Malcolmson (1993) have, for example, reported rates of 59.5 to 74.3 per 100,000 in various communities in the Arctic, compared to around 13.5 per 100,000 in the general Canadian population. The highest risk group is the young males and this rate is increasing (Kirmayer, 1995), a situation echoing Australia (Reser, 1989b). Some communities have reported extraordinary high rates among the young by any international standards. Wotton (1985), for example, reported a rate as high as 295 per 100,000 for 15 to 25 year olds in one community.

As in Australia, there is little study of attempters in the Arctic (and Canada as a whole). Boyer, Légaré, St-Laurent and Prévile (1998) present a unique study of attempt rates in the Inuit. They reported a life-time prevalence of 14%. This rate compares to one of 3% in the general population (Domino and Leenaars, 1994). If this is true in the South, as we believe, then rates of suicide attempts are truly at epidemic levels, like the rates of suicide, among the Indigenous people. Thus, it is easy to conclude

that suicide and suicide attempts are a serious public health problem and mental health problem in the North and South.

Stories from the People

Understanding suicide is complex, more complex than early commentators in both the North and South suggested. Suicide has increasingly been understood as multifarious. As in all suicides, there is pain, mental constriction, frustration of needs, and so on (Leenaars, 1996; Shneidman, 1985). Suicide is, however, not simply a psychological event. Suicide is equally an event with socio-cultural aspects (Hunter, 1991b; Shneidman, 1985). As is well known, the Indigenous people have experienced profound cultural change in their lives and this rapid change has had a major impact on the Inuit and Aboriginal people (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1995; Read, undated). Thus, it is easy to conclude that a socio-historical account is crucial for understanding contemporary suicide in both the South (Hunter, 1991b) and the North (Leenaars, Anowak and Taparti, 1998).

To understand suicide, we believe that giving voice to the people is a credible avenue to knowledge (Hunter, 1991a; Leenaars, 1995). Narrative accounts have, in fact, a long history in people's past. They have been *the* way to knowledge among Indigenous people since the world began. In Western culture, science has included not only statistical nomothetic approaches but also narrative, idiographic approaches (Benjafield, 2000; Windelband, 1904). Although there may be shortcomings in the use of idiographic approaches (e.g., unrepresentativeness of sample, self-deception, blindness to motives, errors in memory), Allport, in 1942, had argued for the use of such documentation, showing the importance of personal documents in human sciences. He argued that letters, logs, memoirs, diaries, autobiographies, personal accounts, and so on, have a place in understanding people and to aid in the aims of science in general—understanding, prediction and control. This has been true in suicidology (e.g., the study of suicide notes) (Shneidman, 1980). The tabular, statistical, demographic, quantitative, nomothetic approach has a place in understanding the generalizations about suicide among the Indigenous people. Yet, the idiographic approach, which involves the intense study of individuals, equally has a place. It is, in fact, the personal accounts that allow us to “do justice to the fascinating individuality” of people (Allport, 1942).

Story telling or narrative knowing is the tradition of people across the world (Kral, Arnakaq, Ekho, Kunuk, Ootoova, Papatsie and Taparti, 1998; Leenaars and Kral, 1996). No statistics can capture the pain of the people, and thus, we report some personal documents about the events. We do not wish to imply that the nomothetic avenue has no place, only that both

avenues are needed to comprehend suicide among the Inuit and Aborigines, a view supported by a report of the International Academy for Suicide Research (Leenaars, De Leo, Diekstra, Goldney, Kelleher, Lester and Nordstrom, 1997). The documents will be the actual words from Anawak, Brown, Hill-Keddie, and Taparti. Each of these individuals was asked to reflect on the issues of suicide and to share some of their thoughts and reflections on the topic. The words below are extracted from documents, discussions, communications and presentations (e.g., Anawak, 1994; Brown, 1991, 1992; Hill-Keddie, 1997; and Taparti, 1998).

The Problem

Epidemiology does not provide a full reflection of the pain in the North nor in the South. To illustrate, let us share with you a trip on the land in the Arctic. The senior author (Leenaars, 1995) went out for a Kamatiq (sled) ride with two Inuit guides on Bafin Island. We went over the ice of Frobisher Bay and went inland over the small lakes and land, while it was snowing. We travelled and travelled. The caribou were passing us; it was like what one sees on a National Geographic special. The land is not only beautiful but also healing. On the trip, we stopped at a camp for tea—after all it was 2:00 p.m.—and as we sat, one Inuk (singular for Inuit) told about his sister and brother who had killed themselves. Everywhere there is pain. Regardless of where you go, one becomes aware of the vast number of suicides. All of the community is experiencing aftershock. The official statistics of the North are likely unreliable, according to the people themselves. Subsequently, travel to Australia suggested a similar problem. Suicide is so vast in both regions. Not only do the epidemiological studies underreport the problem, but the people themselves had become silent.

Jack Anawak stated the following about the silence and what the people need to do:

It is a sad fact that the Arctic leads the country in many respects when it comes to suicide. I say this because we cannot sit back and pretend this problem will go away or just solve itself. We cannot assume that other people will address the problem or take action on our behalf. It is our problem and we have to deal with it. Often we have heard people say they are scared to talk about it because if they do, it will cause more people to consider doing it. This kind of fear and the silence that results from it keeps the subject of suicide under the table instead of being put squarely on the table to be looked at and dealt with. I believe that when we learn to really listen to each other and care deeply about keeping the lines of communication going with each

other that people are going to feel better about themselves and their work.

It is especially the young who are affected in the Arctic. The same is true in Australia. Trish Hill-Keddie noted:

The majority of suicide attempts within the community have been by Aboriginal youth, aged between 14-18 years. Tragically, these young people have never been re-integrated back into the family unit or their community. Suicide attempts within the community are hidden from Police and welfare agencies, simply because of the shame attached to the attempt.

There are young people who choose suicide because of the psychological impact that the history has on both them and their parents.

Let us illustrate with a case example from the South from Hill-Keddie.

At approximately 12:35 a.m. during a head count, the deceased "was discovered hanging by a torn bed sheet from the louvers."

The deceased had made a telephone call to a female on the day before his death. The call apparently caused him some distress, although the contents of the conversation are unknown. At approximately 12:00 a.m. he had shown a letter to his cellmate who declined to read it (believed to be a suicide note).

According to the Queensland Corrective Services Commission report, there had been no "current indications" that the deceased was at risk as he had "not been assessed as being at risk or requiring observations since August 1995" (Indigenous Deaths in Custody 1989-1996. A report prepared by the Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission).

This young Murrie boy who took his life will never again feel the sun upon his face, the voice of his mother who loved him, the laughter of his brothers and sisters, or the sounds of the didgeridoo the things he loved in life. Sadly, the child's mother was taken from her family during a "social experiment" which went horribly wrong, she was trying to come to terms with her own loss and grief, and had thought many times of taking her own life. The forced separation of thousands of Aboriginal children from their parents and families is still impacting upon our people today.

The association of the rise in suicide to cultural genocide is obvious to the Indigenous people. Hill-Keddie's own memories are as follows:

Mum remembers being dragged away kicking and screaming, Nanna was collecting the eggs when the welfare car came up and a Policeman grabbed them. They were trying to get out of the car window and nanna was trying to grab their hands and get them out (abridged from an article in *The bulletin* June 27, 1995, used with permission).

This scenario is one to which I can relate. I am a "stolen child", this extract is from an article written by my sister. I am a survivor of what has been described as attempted genocide, but there are many Aboriginal people who have past and present, mutilated, self harmed, and attempted suicide in an effort to erase the separation pain they endured during this experiment. The suicide attempts are at present growing, and are exacerbated by existing Government Policy, ill health, in communities, unemployment dislocation and family breakdown. The majority of these attempts are youth. Most attempts are made within the communities, they are hidden from the public.

Of course, the secrecy and denial are not only about suicide but about many aspects of life and death. As an example, the loss of culture can be dramatically illustrated in the alienation that occurs during death in these cultures. Bereavement has often, in fact, been seen as a window to a culture (Leenaars, 1999; Wass and Neimeyer, 1995). Colleen Brown noted:

Years ago bereavement wasn't such a big deal because of the closeness in the kinship with Aboriginal people. If somebody died at Wreck Bay the biggest church service was held—in the house where that dead person came from it was beautiful. Nobody seemed really sad, it was like one big family, all together, it was really good. Over the years a lot of that closeness has gone. The old people have gone and they are a totally different generation of people.

Because of a lot of settlements around the states there are a lot of people moving away from the missions to areas where they know nobody. If a death occurs within their family where they have moved to they have go nobody to go to that they could relate to.

The North has an equal problem in bereavement. Grief in the North and South is often complicated grief (Cox, Bendikson and Stevenson, 1999). People do not know how to experience and express their losses, abandonments, etc. Not only is there suicide and death, there was a loss of how to cope with life's losses, pain and so forth. How to live was lost to the Indigenous people in both regions.

Cultural Genocide

There is no question that the high rates of suicide in the North and South are largely due to cultural genocide. As an example, Australia's people were taken away as children from their families and were raised as White children in White homes. Historically, the official perspective on why children were taken from their families and raised by the non-Aboriginal people in the last decades can be gleaned from the doctrine of the Aborigines Protection Board in 1909. The abduction of children was to be a solution to "aimless, useless life of idleness and vice" of the Indigenous people in Australia. The adults were written off as lost generations, but the children of the Aborigines, the Congress decided, required the "gravest consideration." The *only* solution (somewhat consistent with a suicidal mind) was the following:

... the removal of the children and their complete isolation from the influences of the camps. Under no circumstances whatever should the boys and girls be allowed to return to the camps, except on a short visit in an emergency and then only by consent of the department... In the course of a few years there will be no need for the camps and stations; the old people will have passed away, and their progeny will be absorbed in the industrial classes of the country (Aborigines Protection Board, 1909).

The Aborigines Protection Act was amended in 1916; it read "The Board may assume full custody and control of the child of any Aborigine, if after due inquiry it is satisfied that such a course is in the interest of the moral and physical welfare of the child." Often there were no inquiries, the children were simply "taken". The government had the power to remove any child, much like the aim of the residential schools in Canada, as we will see. Stories are rife about the unbearable pain that occurred, because of the government's solution. Loss, abandonment, hopelessness and helplessness were common reactions. In Australia there are endless stories about the stolen generations (Morgan, 1987; Read, undated). Pauline McLeod, an Aboriginal poet, is a well-known public case example of the "taken". She writes:

Separated
 Fretting, sad
 Given into other hands.
 Parents, sisters, brothers
 gone
 Wondering what did
 I do wrong

Pauline McLeod was separated from her family at a young age and lived in various homes until she was four. Pauline was told that her natural parents had abused, neglected and rejected her. At 12, she was sexually abused by her foster father—an event that occurred frequently among the “taken”. Yet, she writes, “I’ve lost one family, I don’t want to lose another, so I’d always do whatever they’d say. Even things that were quite hurtful or annoying I’d tolerate.” Pauline struggled during adolescence. One day when threatened to be sent away for stealing, she attempted suicide with a gun. To return to the family, she was required to say “Rosy red, everything was alright, nothing was wrong.” Later, Pauline discovered her Aboriginality and survives today because of this ownership. She writes: “Please! No more, the hurt, the pain.”

Of course, in Canada, atrocities also occurred. In Canada, including the Arctic, the Native children were taken to residential schools. We shall not expand here the events in detail as it would repeat the accounts from Australia; however, let us quote Roland Chrisjohn (1994), a Native psychologist in Canada. He stated:

Residential schools were one of many attempts at the genocide of the Aboriginal Peoples inhabiting the area now commonly called Canada. Initially, the goal of obliterating these peoples was connected with stealing what they owned (the land, the sky, the waters, and their lives, and all that these encompassed); and although this connection persists, present-day acts and policies of genocide are also connected with the hypocritical, legal and self-delusional need on the part of the perpetrators to conceal what they did and what they continued to do. A variety of rationalizations (social, legal, religious, political, and economic) arose to engage (in one way or another) all segments of Euro-Canadian society in the task of genocide. For example, some were told (and told themselves) that their actions arose out of a Missionary Imperative to bring the benefits of the One True Belief to savage pagans; others considered themselves justified in land theft by declaring that the Aboriginal Peoples were not putting the land to “proper” use; and so on. The creation of Indian Residential Schools followed a time-tested method of obliterating indigenous cultures, and the psychosocial consequences these schools would have on Aboriginal Peoples were well understood at the time of their formation. Present-day symptomology found in Aboriginal Peoples and societies does not constitute a distinct psychological condition, but is the well known and long-studied response of human beings living under conditions of severe

and prolonged oppression. Although there is no doubt that individuals who attended Residential Schools suffered, and continue to suffer, from the effects of their experiences, the tactic of pathologizing these individuals, studying their condition, and offering "therapy" to them and their communities must be seen as another rhetorical maneuver designed to obscure (to the world at large, to Aboriginal Peoples, and to Canadians themselves) the moral and financial accountability of Euro-Canadian society in a continuing record of Crimes Against Humanity (Chrisjohn and Young, 1996:2. Quoted with permission).

Genocide was widespread. It was layer of cultural genocide upon layer of cultural genocide. The Native people were subjected to a genocide (Government of Canada, 1998; Hunter, 1991a; Leenaars, 1995), actions that were intended to remove the people from earth as a people. It was one generation after the next, since Cabot landed in Canada and Cook in Australia. The foster homes in Australia and residential schools in Canada were only the latest attempts at cultural genocide. These atrocities, however, had been denied, even by the people themselves. In the North and South, people are only since the 1990s beginning to remember and accept the problems. Jack Anowak stated:

We must never give away this responsibility for this problem ever again! Nothing ever got any better when we tried to give it over to others—in fact things just got worse! It's time to admit this problem isn't going to noticeably decrease until we look at how we are reacting to it, take the steps NOW to make the changes in our own homes, in our own lives and in the level of interest, sincerity and understanding we show to our young people. If we don't set an example on how we deal with our own frustrations, anger, fear and uncertainty then how can we expect someone younger, and perhaps more vulnerable to handle their issues any better?

People from around the world need to understand the malaise in both regions. Lucien Taparti reflected:

... when it comes to us, the people in the communities, I wonder if we are going to be silent about this or are we going to try to do something about this before our elders die off.

A person's life is precious and it seems like the elders knew this. Even though the people were capable once, later they forgot these things. For example, they have forgotten the hunting of the animals and the heavy labours of survival on the

land. Even though these people know they need help, they don't really ask for help, so it becomes a burden for them in their mind.

The same is true in Australia. Trish Hill-Keddie stated:

The assimilation policy from past years is still prevalent in today's society, and although these young people have never been "stolen" from their families, they experience the pain that their parents are enduring. Many young people have unwanted pregnancies at 14 years, and cannot cope with the hardship they must endure at such a tender age. There are many factors attributing to attempts, but one of the most alarming, is glue sniffing. When you have been dispossessed it is a feeling of absolute isolation and exile, it is a feeling of having your very heart ripped from your body. You no longer have your extended family for support—for they are lost in their own despair. Aboriginal people dispossessed feed off those with the same loss, this alienates our people from mainstream resources that would enable them to heal.

Colleen Brown has also noted that we must listen to the people. Only then will the people share the pain and heal "in return for our willingness to listen and to try to understand." Generations had suffered, but the people are now a healing people.

Giving Voice

The people had been silent. They were lost. They were stolen. Yet, there is now a voice crying in the wilderness in both the desert of the South and the tundra of the North.

During a visit in the early 1990s to Rankin Inlet, a beautiful community on the very north shore of Hudson Bay, the senior author and Jack Anawak, M.P. met with Senator Willie Adams and the mayor of a hamlet, Chesterfield (Leenaars, 1995). At a recent school reunion in Chesterfield, there had been many tales of abuse and sexual abuse by the White men. The abuse, like elsewhere, was often by the Catholic priests and Anglican ministers. Since the events in Chesterfield were learned, it has become well documented that they were not unusual in residential schools (Government of Canada, 1998). Since the first landings, the churches were not only the promoters of cultural genocide for the Kings and Queens, but also carried out the atrocities. An Inuk woman, for example, shared the following about abuse by a priest in a residential school. She said sexual abuse occurred to everyone. It happened for years; yet, she believes that "it never bothered" her. Although, at the same time, she reports years of depression, asking

why she might feel that way. She was alienated not only from the past but from herself. These events had been shared over and over by many in the Arctic.

Sexual abuse is also now discussed in Australia. Pauline McLeod, the poet discussed earlier, was sexually abused. Sexual abuse was not rare in the "taken", but it was only in the early 1990s that a voice to the abuse was spoken. Sexual abuse, rape, and so on, often of children, occurred to the Indigenous people from the first days that the conquerors landed. Even the stories of Christopher Columbus attest to the rapes and subsequent massive suicides that occurred in the Caribbean. The sexual abuse was only one abuse. As an aftershock, the memories were subsequently buried, to use a metaphor, in the sand and the snow. There was loss. There was a loss of identity. There was no respect. There was no dignity. To heal, the people must now reclaim what is buried (repressed), including the unbearable PAIN.

Jack Anawak stated:

In our tightly-knit communities we too, have developed some gaping holes that we must not ignore. We cannot pretend that we are all happy and are all safe within ourselves. Our traditional beliefs remind us that we are interdependent—we affect each other. We are taught that there is a collective benefit only when we work together, value each other and ensure that people have a sense of belonging. We have to take a long look at ourselves to see if we live our own lives honouring these principles in our daily interaction with our families and within our communities.

Trish Hill-Keddie stated the same:

Each suicide, or attempt within the community is an irreplaceable loss, which makes Aboriginal people feel that they are under constant threat of genocide again. The loss of Aboriginal identity and the destruction of Aboriginal culture have contributed to a tremendous sense of loss within Indigenous communities. Children are urbanized to a point where they are accepting the "white mans" way of living, drugs and alcohol are an indiscriminate part of life, this paves the way for our children to lose themselves and their identity. They are being assimilated into the lowest classes of the culture imposed upon them. They are not learning about the importance of their culture and current education systems treat the culture as stories and myths. The system we live in now does not tolerate discipline, white structures have now penetrated traditional ways, our children have no longer the respect for our old people, who

once held great esteem within the community. They do not understand how actions of the past impact on their lives, they just feel empty.

A healing is needed. Trish Hill-Keddie concluded:

Aboriginal people are surrounded by death, whether it be from a death in custody or death of our culture, and the death of our land or suicide within the Aboriginal community. Aboriginal people are not provided with answers, therefore reinforcing the feeling of powerlessness, which then results in hopelessness and extreme turmoil. Many Aboriginal people turn their grief upon themselves, in that, the experiences they and their families have undergone in the past have impacted upon them so heavily some have forgotten who they are, and some have never known. The thought that the deceased's spirit will never be "set free" adds to the loss and grief they are experiencing, therefore making it impossible to deal with. Many of our people have forgotten how to cry, and consequently, never share their grief with anyone else. The fear of death lurking, and the inconsolable sadness and loss, combined with enormous depression, the break-up of the family unit, alcohol and drugs, and the already total isolation does not enable Aboriginal people to go through the "healing process."

Lucien Taparti has stated the same in the North:

Many of us have experienced losing someone. That's why I really want to talk about it. If I were silent, I know it wouldn't be of help. We have to be visible and if we are visible then that's how the problem will become visible.

Culture

The pain of the people is "deep in the psyche." Traditional ways among the people had been forgotten. Acculturation was the norm. People don't know who they are, where they came from, and where they are going. The abuse at Chesterfield, for example, is only the surface of the problem. How the people think... how they talk... has been affected deep in their psyche. The people in both the North and the South had their culture stolen. Culture is the collective meaning and value of a people. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1995) in Canada wrote:

Culture is the whole complex of relationships, knowledge, languages, social institutions, beliefs, values and ethical rules that bind a people together and give a collective and its

individual members a sense of who they are and where they belong (p.25).

Culture is rooted in one's land. It is a vast heritage. The cultural genocide was initiated to destroy that meaning and this deeply affected the mind and spirit of the people. The best analogy that we can offer from the North is the iceberg. In the Arctic, icebergs are large and what people are beginning to struggle with in the North is likely the tip of the iceberg. Analogously what people are beginning to struggle with in the South is only a few grains of sand from the desert and in Australia, the outbacks are very large. Colleen Brown stated:

I would dearly love to be able to get with the older people, too, that were taken away and get their feelings and thoughts on it, you know, but the trouble is that they have kept it for so many years inside that I don't think they would ever part with why, or explain or talk about why and their life being taken away from their family. I think what they have done is suppress it so far down that they won't let it come to the surface.

Only by re-learning the traditional ways and meanings with the new is healing possible. We do not believe that people can only heal by going back to the old; there is a need for growth and development in culture. To go back to only the old ways is much too simplistic of a solution. This is as true for the North as it is in the South.

There are problems in both regions. Substance abuse is, for example, a major one. The governments, however, rather than developing ways at prevention, used the alcoholism against the people themselves. The authorities in Australia, for example, did not tell the stolen children about their families, their culture and so forth. The government actually intentionally used the alcohol to destroy the culture and then perpetrated the lies to the "taken". The children were told that the parents were only drunks, with no contribution to their meaning and lives. In response, Colleen Brown stated:

... the trouble is the takers never told the taken why their father and mother ended up alcoholics, did they? I mean, why did the older people end up like that, I mean, it's easy—their kids were taken from them. How else did they expect them to react? They drank themselves to death, the parents. I watched them. I watched it all my years of growing up. The parents drinking themselves to death because the welfare came and took their kids. I mean what else did they have to do with their lives? I saw one woman go into the hospital and I used to watch and think, oh, she's coming home today. She would never come

home from hospital with a baby. The welfare would take the child from her before she left the hospital. They let her keep the eldest boy, all the rest after that were never brought home. I mean, you know, that couple drank themselves to death. I had the eldest son that was left with the parents say to me, "Aunt, how do I get me family back together? I want my family to be a family." I said, "Mate, it won't happen." I said, "You could try, I'll help you in every way." I said, "It sounds good but there's no closeness." It comes back to what we were talking about earlier. There was no family closeness, they were all separated. I said, "It just doesn't happen that way," I said, "It's a fairy tale."

Of course, people need to understand that the substance abuse is a face of self-destruction (Farberow, 1980), not the cause of it. The substance abuse is a result of the cultural genocide, not the cause of it. Trish Hill-Keddie noted the following about such problems:

Suicide in Aboriginal communities is "taboo." It becomes a shame issue. The family of the victim is either shunned, or the actual event never occurred. No intervention takes place, no loss and grief, no questions asked, it is accepted, Why? What can be so traumatizing as to push a young person to neck themselves. This is the reality of being part of a minority group that has been imprisoned by a culture that sees itself as perfect and expects all other cultures to conform to its ideologies, however, it brings with it white alcoholism, ill health, incarceration and an inconsolable sense of loss.

I look at my life and question why I am so comfortable, why I have not self harmed, I am, like many Aboriginal people dispossessed, fighting a system that does not acknowledge my culture, that still believes I come under the "Fisheries and Fauna Act," that believes Aboriginal people should reconcile with "white Australians," yet we as Indigenous people remain at the bottom of the Social Justice ladder.

Healing is possible. Many people in the North and South believe healing is now occurring. People need to give voice to the sexual abuse, the alcohol use and much more. Suicide must be discussed. Jack Anawak once said, "I have no questions about who I am. I'm an Inuk, but I can adapt to other ways." The Aborigines in Australia have said the same: "I am Koorie—I survive" (Koorie is a group of Aborigines living in New South Wales).

In the North and the South, the people speak about assimilation, acculturation, and being "totally lost." Accepting the acculturation is hard; yet we and others encourage progress, a "waking up." The Inuit and

Aborigines are beginning to talk. Yet, healing will take a long time, because the Indigenous people have not only lost their way of life, but some, their spirit. They were stripped of their dignity by the White man. There was no respect of people. Their children were taken from them. They were imprisoned for speaking their languages. They were raped. They were abused. It was a *cultural genocide* and, as the example of Tasmania will show, it was a *genocide*.

Many doubt that genocide occurred among Indigenous people, even if these same people accept that cultural genocide occurred. The attempt to kill the Indigenous people across the world can, however, be tragically illustrated by the events in Tasmania (Commonwealth of Australia, 1990).

In 1788 Governor Arthur Phillip arrived in Sydney, Australia. The settlers, many of them convicts, came to settle the land. The Native people fought for their land, but the British soldiers attacked and killed the people. They destroyed the lifestyle. There was resistance, some like Pemulway, a warrior, fought but was killed (New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, undated). Within 50 years, the colonists hunted down and killed the people by the hundreds. The Arctic did not see these large-scale massacres, likely because there was no value to the land in the North initially. Of course other atrocities, such as the introduction of the great diseases (e.g., measles, tuberculosis, influenza) by the White people contributed heavily to the people's demise in the North. But, in Australia, the land had immediate value and was taken away from the Native people. If the Natives were in the way of these conquests, like in Tasmania, they were killed.

The Tasmanians lived on the land, the island, since the world began. They were a sharing people: Sharing food, holding sacred and secret ceremonies, arranging marriages. Men hunted. Women gathered small animals, collected shellfish and prepared food. They were a spiritual people. They had totems and taboos. Then, the invaders came.

In 1642, the Dutch navigator Abel Tasman landed. This signaled the end of the Aboriginal isolation and life style. From the 1770s on, the English and French visited the island and in 1803, the first "settlers" came and tragedy prevailed.

Aboriginal society is based on sharing and exchange. In return for gifts, Aborigines expected fairness and respect, that was their way as it is in the North. The settlers, however, saw the Aborigines as taking the land because primitive ownership of the land was not understood. They set up land claims, built fences and so on. The Aborigines' land and sacred places were taken. Hostilities arose. In 1804, the first massacre in Tasmania occurred. Women and children were ordered to be killed. By 1806, massacres were common: Children were abducted; women were raped, even the young; people were

tortured; and all Native people were enslaved. By 1820, the White settlers poured into the land in greater numbers, taking more and more land that did not belong to them. Then in 1824, Governor Arthur proclaimed martial law. He ordered every Aborigines man, woman and child to be killed. A reward was offered for their heads and a massacre occurred. The Aborigines people fought back. In 1830, a military operation was introduced to kill all remaining Aborigines. Between 1829 to 1834, it was believed that the genocide was completed. The last Tasmanian, Fanny Cochrane Smith, died in 1876. Yet, the people prevailed. There were survivors of Tasmania, who had fled to the mainland. These people today have returned to Tasmania and continue to live on their land.

Tasmania is, unfortunately, only an illustration. We shall not report other atrocities in the South or the North. We will only cite, as an example from Canada, that Cartier, the French conqueror, exterminated the Stadaconans on the St. Lawrence River in the same fashion in Canada (Ray, 1996). Tasmania is not unique; rather, it illustrates the intentional genocide against Indigenous people all over the globe.

There is hope, however, from the abyss. Lucien Taparti, stated that "people have been crying inside for a long time." Yet, he sees hope in culture. Lucien Taparti stated:

We all have different lives, different cultures, and we can't say that the qablunaat have a strong culture. All of us came from our ancestors and if we could grasp that back then there were less suicides, perhaps we could start utilizing our culture for prevention. We'll have to know more about the cultures of our ancestors, and try to follow them and try to help each other more. We can use many peoples' cultures, whether they may be the qablunaats', the Dene's, or even the Inuit's culture. If we can be more aware of people's cultures, I'm sure we would be able to come up with something that would be of benefit.

Culture, the way of the people, is a solution. Colleen Brown quotes the following from one of the "taken" when asked what she would say to the White people:

What would I say to them? Oh, what would I say to them. I suppose just try to understand. I mean, you've gotta been there, done that situation to know what's going on. Just listen to them, try to understand. Because what's happened to them, what's happened to me, has really knocked me around. Even today it knocks me about. Just try to understand that...listen to them, you know. Being brought up by white people, it's hard, but it's even more harder when you get out, out into the real

world, real society, when you run into your own people. I used to just walk past my people, you know, just look at them, just keep walking.

There is hope. The culture in the North and South, despite the attempt at cultural genocide, is alive. The cultural genocide failed. It is culture, the people's heritage, that now offers hope.

Colleen Brown stated:

Our history is to be found in the "unhistoric," in the suffering of an oppressed people, struggling with the question of what it is to be human and Aboriginal in a seemingly inhumane world.

We make people aware of what our culture is about. There are a lot of people who've grown up in other towns that never had to do with Aboriginal people. They read and see things on television. What publicity is highlighted to do with Aboriginal people, it is all bad. They only show the bad ones, it's never the good ones that they show.

Years ago the townspeople weren't interested in anything about the Aboriginal people, whereas today, because I suppose we have got a lot of people within different Aboriginal departments, they are willing to learn more, which is a whole new turn around.

Lucien Taparti gives snow as a method to the solution in the North and, we believe, the South. He stated:

We really have to start thinking of ways to rectify things. I'm sure this can be achieved somehow, but I don't know the answer to it. If solutions came from a larger community it could be a starting point, and even if they think they couldn't come up with solutions, they would be able to do so. Just as long as they have appropriate laws (rules) that they'd use. As long as the rules are capable of being followed. I'll use snow as an example: it is worked on by different people—some are very good with snow and some are able to work with it but not as well. That's why we use different types of snow to work with. Snow was our means of survival, even when we were young and even when we became adults. I wasn't worried at all, knowing that we'll get an iglu, even when there was going to be a blizzard. That was one of the laws and I followed it; so that was our life and the iglus were where our lives were. That's how we used to live in the winter time.

And Jack Anowak stated:

As Inuit people we have survived in what is considered to be the most challenging climate in the world. We have coped for hundreds, even thousands of years and developed attitudes, behaviours, values and beliefs that allowed us to face whatever had to be dealt with and to overcome great difficulties. We must call upon those same values that brought us to this day. We need to own this problem. We cannot give it over to the governments, authorities, specialists, professionals, scholars, organizations or consultants. We own this problem. Say it... Believe it! We are part of the problem if we do not acknowledge this fact and take both individual and collective action to address it.

We have finally come to realize that:

WE are the experts on our stories.

WE know the strengths and weaknesses of our own communities.

We have a pretty good idea about how things got this way.

We have a value system that is worth honouring...

and WE do have the brains to figure out what to do about it

Culture is a way to healing for all people. Polly Sumner-Dodd (1997) has concluded the same: "The incidence of suicide prevailing unveils to us a landscape of unhealed emotional wounds, a reluctance or even lethargy to seek therapeutic intervention, the availability of Aboriginal appropriate treatment regimes and the failure of institutions, such as family, health and welfare support services and custodial centres in their duty to care." In the North and the South, the people are now calling for traditional healing. Western treatments are, in fact, often one more attempt at cultural genocide. Simple solutions do not work. Yet, going back to only the old is not a solution either. We are at the beginning of the year 2,000. "Long times", as Indigenous people would say, are needed for healing. Sumner-Dodd (1997), in fact, concluded the following: "Perhaps it describes the resiliences of the Aboriginal community as by right they (Aborigines) should have all fallen by the wayside." The same is true in the North. To repeat Jack Anawak's words: "As Inuit people, we have survived in what is considered to be the most challenging climate in the world." The people will survive. It is, in fact, believed by many Native people that the White men may not survive, if they continue their atrocities to people and to the Mother, Earth.

Lucien Taparti has made the same observation in the North. He stated:

If we started tackling different things that we were capable of doing on our own, we couldn't really think of other things to get into. Soon as we were capable to do things that we had to

follow, we didn't have much to be concerned with, not like our young people I see today. That's how it is with our culture from the harsh region; our cultures are all different and we need to keep our culture visible. If we ignore the issue, it is obvious that it won't get rectified.

The solution, according to Lucien Taparti, is "to teach our young people of their own culture, whether it be Inuit culture, qablunaat's culture..." In both the North and South, culture, i.e., the collective meaning and value of a people, is seen as the means for healing. This is true, of course, for all sound healing, even Western ones (Leenaars, Maltsberger and Neimeyer, 1994). The Indigenous people survived since the beginning of time. They still know how.

A Final Story

One marvels at the people in the North and the South. They have endured and survived cultural genocide and sometimes genocide. They are a strong people; their visions, in fact, will be essential to all, if we are to survive the 21st century.

We are struck by the similarities of the North and the South. As a final illustration, we share a story from the North: In Pangnirtung, we had heard an Elder speak. She told about the old ways, and then the whalers came. People hunted. People cleaned the whale... "and then the white man would take the catch, leaving only blubber for us." "In our way," she said, "we share the labour and the catch."

In Wreck Bay in Australia, we had heard another Elder speak. He told about the old ways and then the sailors came. Sealskins were desired. People had always hunted the seal for food, skin and so on, this was the law of the land. Yet, when the sailors came they violated the law, taking only the skin. The people were forced to help in the hunt. Not only Nature but people were abused. The people were treated cruelly, leaving nothing for the Aborigine ways. The Elder said that the Aborigine way is one of sharing and then we will survive. The fact that these two different cultures, the North and the South, have the same archetypical story is not an accident. It is the wisdom of the people, since the world began.

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