DRINKING AND DRIVING IN HORIZON: A HOLISTIC DESCRIPTION THROUGH THE LENS OF A COMMUNITY TALKING CIRCLE

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PREFACE

The project, designed to be completed on March 31, 2005, was based on a timeline that was tight but doable. The proposal received approval in the first week of January 2005, but the Canada Health contract was not received until the end of February, whereupon it had to go through the University of Alberta research office for further approval. Needless to say, we were left with about three weeks of activities originally scheduled for three months. Still we persevered and completed the project in its camera-ready form in April.

INTRODUCTION

Excessive alcohol use associated with driving for 18 29 years olds is a serious public health problem (Dejong & Hingson, 1998; Gfroerer, Greenblatt, & Wright, 1997). For the year 2003, drinking and driving was involved in 25.1% of all traffic crash deaths in Alberta, Canada. Furthermore, 44.7% of drinking driver casualties were between 18 and 29 years old (Alberta Transportation, 2003). More alarming are the First Nations drinking and driving statistics. Although First Nations People represent 4.4% of the population for the year 2001, they were overrepresented at 16% in all of the Alberta traffic-related deaths (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2004). Impaired driving was involved in 73.2% of all Aboriginal motor vehicle fatalities, 61% of Aboriginal drivers

had a blood alcohol concentration above .08%, and according to RCMP Traffic Services, First Nations people were 5 times more likely to be involved in fatal alcohol-related crashes (Alberta Transportation, 2002; Health Canada, 2003). The statistics illustrate a need for culturally sensitive data that sheds some light on the First Nations drinking and driving reality.

An important factor that mediates the high rate of drinking and driving amongst First Nations people is the community context. The reference includes the challenges and social construction of a First Nations community related to the risk and resilience of local drinking and driving (Booth & Crouter, 1999). Many First Nations communities experience a level of soul-woundedness, bureaucratically often referred to as 'internal collective dysfunction', that was caused by experiencing hundreds of years of debilitating shocks and traumas. These various sources of trauma include: diseases; the destruction of traditional economies through the expropriation of traditional lands and resources; the undermining of traditional identity; the destruction of indigenous forms of governance; and the breakdown of healthy patterns of individual, family and community life (Aboriginal Peoples Collection, 2002). In response, First Nations people may engage in health risk responses, one of which is alcohol abuse followed by drinking and driving. Both options contribute to a community's state of disrepair (Navarro, 1997; Walmsley, 2004). The theme of this study, therefore, is to bring the community context into focus through people's lives. The findings expressed in this paper are predicated on the context of First Nations' people living in one First Nation community located in northeastern Alberta, hereby referred to as Horizon, Alberta.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Drinking and driving morbidity and mortality amongst First Nations people continue to escalate. The nature of the problem suggests a need to investigate the different levels of involvement in drinking and driving, interrelated systemic factors underlying the involvement, social and contextual influences, and personal meanings. On that basis, the purpose of the study was to:

- detail historical, family, and community experiences that influence First Nations drivers' self-reported drinking and driving behaviors.
- provide the basis for community change through the efforts of First Nations people.
- develop a template for Talking Circle research that can be used by First Nations communities in Alberta in their quest to deal with sensitive issues like drinking and driving.
- provide the basis for the next stage of community development.

The vision for the study was to initiate community-shared descriptions and allow them to serve as the basis for community-based follow-up intervention.

METHODOLOGY

It goes without saying that the methodology used to feature socio/cultural accounts of experience with drinking and driving must not only be sensitive to the human condition, but it must reflect traditional systems of speaking about important issues and problems. It must be sensitive to a group of people who are struggling trying to reclaim their traditional structures and thus their traditional sense of values. A cautionary note guided the methodology. "Researcher-specified-categories" or "pre-determined concepts" may lack meaning and relevance in this particular cultural context (Nichter et al., 2002).

A holistic research methodology traditionally referred to as the "Talking Circle" was used to strive for "balance" and "support" among and between members of the

community and to explore meanings, experiences, and views of young First Nations drivers. This approach eliminates or controls the intrusion of outside "experts" into the community, experts who are keen to impose their framework of reality with pre-defined categories and frames of meaning (Smith as cited in Battiste, 2000). It was used to overcome historical obstacles such as: lack of meaningful participant involvement, lack of "authentic" partnerships with communities, research methods that are incompatible with First Nations culture, no follow-up or reporting back to the community, and lack of community involvement in defining the purpose of the study. The Talking Circle, or from hereon referred to as the "Sharing Circle," is a culturally safe, relevant approach conducted by local First Nations' researchers with First Nations' people. It is intimately connected to the First Nations' philosophy of sharing, supporting, and respecting the presentation of life experiences.

The Sharing Circle is a First Nations qualitative approach that incorporates oral traditions, personal interaction, and group consensus. It promotes direct participant involvement in the identification of problems and determination of solutions. It is a community approach designed for collective decisions that are made through group processes (Struthers et al., 2003). To date, the Sharing Circle has primarily been used as a culturally sensitive approach to teach culture and tradition (Cesario, 2001), promote health (Hodge, Frederick & Rodriguez, 1996), and to provide spiritual counseling and healing. It has been used less for research purposes generally, and seldom, if at all, in injury prevention. In that sense this study takes on an exploratory meaning, to realize the value such an approach has for in-depth data collection, community change, and the initiation of community development.

Researcher and Researched

A guiding principle for Sharing Circles is that there is no clear distinction between the researchers and the researched. It is a reciprocal relationship in which all who participate share in the exchange of life stories (Tandon, 1988). All participants contribute to the process equally. It stresses the creation of an emancipatory reality in which support is encouraged and criticism is suspended. Everyone shares, supports, and respects each other. The only difference between the researchers and those being researched is that the researchers ask the questions. The culturally spiritual meaning of the process envelops equal participation – individuals linked to one another in a respectful and emotionally sensitive manner. The researchers take on the role of facilitator, encouraging individuals to participate and providing support while at the same time maintaining a view to the purpose of the endeavor.

Three local First Nations researchers facilitated the Sharing Circle. The format enabled a partnership grounded in empathetic relations and shared interests between researcher and researched, facilitators and participants. There was a shared sense of history, culture, values, beliefs, and action patterns. The researchers "situated themselves" within the participants. They knew the community intimately, and they were local experts of traditional knowledge, thus reducing the chance of researchers not fully understanding the cultural, historical, and pragmatic issues embedded in First Nations participants' lives.

Procedural Tenets

The Sharing Circle used in this study was organized on four basic tenets. They are outlined as follows:

- Participants are to "speak from the heart" - to speak not only with their heads and give objective ideas, but with their feelings as well. They tell their own story as honestly as they can trust in the moment.
- Participants are to "listen from the heart" – to listen without judgment, with an open mind, even if one disagrees with what the person is saying when another person has the talking piece. The success of a circle is determined by the quality of listening.
- Participants are to "speak spontaneously" – to wait until it is their turn to speak before they decide what they want to say. If they are thinking about what they are going to say, then they are not listening completely to the person who is speaking. When persons do not preplan what they are going to say, they will often be surprised what comes to them when it is their turn.
- Participants are to "speak leanly" – to speak without embellishment. Participants are to be aware that others would like a chance to speak, and that there is only so much time.

In short, participants are encouraged to re-think, and then do!

Target Population

The target population of this project was First Nations young drivers aged 18-29, residing in the Horizon First Nations' community. The participants were recruited through a variety of methods – presentation to students at a local First Nations' College, local counseling office, local community health unit, and local word of mouth. In all, 14 participants signed for the session. One did not show.

Consistent with the Sharing Circle's cultural embeddedness, all the participants received a pouch of tobacco for their participation – a culturally enshrined symbolic act. Meals were offered free of charge and coffee was always at reach.

Questions

A series of questions structured the talk. Although the facilitators embraced the chance to present the questions at opportune times, each question was answered at length, with ample opportunity to detail personal experience and point of view. The list of questions was as follows:

1. Who are you? What is your relationship to drinking and driving? How do you feel about that? (How frequent does drinking and driving occur? What's your experience? Is there a difference between 18-year-old and a 29-year-old in terms of their experiences with drinking and driving?)
2. How does your experience connect to what's going on with your friends (Or others in your age group)? Can you speak to or expand upon the topic in the 2nd round?
3. Tell us about drinking and driving as it relates to your family? What do they think about drinking and driving? How do they support (or not support) it?
4. How does your experience differ or relate to what happens in our community? (What's the community message around drinking and driving?)
5. What do you think could make a difference in our community regarding drinking and driving? What are your recommendations for helping this situation? What needs to happen?
6. Do you have anything else that you would like to share or add to what has been shared here today?

Data Collection/Treatment/Verification

The Sharing Circle was held at the Horizon Wellness Centre. Traditional Sharing Circle protocols were implemented, for example, the opening prayer by an "Elder", the smudging ceremony, and the discussion on the ceremonial and procedural components of the Sharing Circle as in turn-taking and closing. All of the participants signed a "Horizon First Nation Drinking and Driving Talking Circle Consent Form" that detailed the purpose of the get-together, the voluntary nature of the activity, the confidentiality of first-person accounts to be kept within the circle, and the assurance of anonymity, namely any information that may identify a speaker in the report to an outside audience.

Furthermore, participants agreed to the audio taping of the meeting, the presentation of findings to the community, follow-up meetings if necessary, and the potential publication of materials.

The atmosphere for the Sharing Circle was supportive, spiritual, and culturally meaningful. All participants had the opportunity to speak from the heart. There was no pressure imposed for quality or quantity of talk.

Proceedings were tape recorded and transcribed. Each participant received a copy of the transcriptions for data verification and editing. Three different researchers analyzed the data – one from a traditional thematic perspective and two from a cultural/community perspective.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE'S SOCIO/HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Introduction

The Socio/Historical Context provides a forum for discussion on the broader implications of drinking and driving on a First Nations community. People know it, share in its reproduction, and live it. But few researchers stop and reflect on it, because it serves as the backdrop for so many of people's behaviors, attitudes, aspirations, routines, and knowledge. The Socio/Historical Context serves as an implicit guide for a group. Each person self-refers to his or her experiences within the context of contemporary and historical social conditions, experiences marked by an incessant sense of belonging or alienation, and change (Kotarba and Fontana, as cited in Adler & Adler, 1987).

So it is with drinking and driving. Although many researchers treat it as an isolated action with measurable characteristics, it is more than that. Drinking and driving

is part of a complex pattern of influence, unspoken, but announced. That is not to say that the social context directly speaks to or affects everyone one-on-one. Rather, it is like an invisible hand that guides people to certain thought and action. Hence it needs to be presented, to establish a greater understanding of situations where consistencies and contradictions may appear to be random findings.

On the Surface

Canada's Indigenous People have a long history of oppression and marginalization, which has lead to much personal pain and woundedness in the lives of young and old alike. As a result, today we see many Indigenous people engaged in harmful behaviors, both to themselves, their families, and the larger Indigenous community. This harmful behavior usually manifests itself in the form of alcohol and substance abuse which, when combined with driving under the influence, results in detrimental consequences to self, family, and the community. Our theory is that alcohol consumption patterns and drinking and driving may have many of its contributing factors based in "historic trauma.[1]" This is not to say that Indigenous people should not be held accountable for any negative outcomes from drinking and driving; we argue that the problem is complex and must take into account Indigenous peoples' historical and social context.

On the surface, when we see a "drunken Indian", often negative stereotypes are conjured up. However, if one looks beyond the physical drunkenness (and at times driving under the influence), the issue becomes more complicated. Frequently, this harmful behavior is not simply a matter of getting into a vehicle and driving under the

[1] Psychological baggage passed from parents to children along with the trauma and grief experienced in each individual's lifetime (AFN, 2004, p. 3)

influence, but is associated with much deeper mental, emotional, spiritual, and psychological conflict. In the case of Canada's Indigenous population, we suggest that the long-term, inter-generational[2] impacts of residential school need to be understood and studied.

Identity Conflict: The Complexity of Drinking & Driving

Few Canadians really understand the complex nature of Indigenous people's connection to the land, and more importantly, their historic relationship with the churches and the federal government. This latter relationship, which can best be described as an emotionally traumatizing experience, is a major factor contributing to Indigenous peoples' struggle with identity. It is also a major contributor to current state of "social problems" and anti-social behavior including drinking and driving faced by many First Nations people.

Indigenous people are continuously labeled as "lazy, good-for-nothing Indians" or better yet, they live with the saying, "the only good Indian is a dead Indian". This section of the study on drinking and driving in Horizon explores this historic connection to our current social realities. We explore the long-term, multi-generational impacts or "historical trauma" of residential school on parents, children, and the larger community through the eyes of Indigenous people and their stories.

[2] the effects of sexual and physical abuse that were passed on to the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Aboriginal people who attended the residential school system (AFN, 2003, p. vii)

Conflicting World-Views, Confused State of Identity and Judgment

How each of us sees and interacts in the world makes us unique creatures of Creation. But it also potentially inhibits our willingness or ability to see others as the unique beings. How I see the world, is not necessarily how others see the world, however, we often assume that the way I see the world is how others do too. This principle is important for First Nations research because in many respects the Indigenous world-view is quite different from the western world-view.

For example, the *Sal'i'shan* Institute's report entitled "*The Mental Health and Well Being of Aboriginal Children and Youth: Guidance for New Approaches and Services*" (2004) summarized Ross' 1996 observations on some elements of traditional Aboriginal world-view:

- Value is placed on wholeness
    - symbolized by the circle, family and community
    - importance of collective well-being – recognition that individual wants or needs must be contextualized in the needs of the family or larger community
    - animation – energy are integral to wholeness
    - holistic approaches are based in relationships
    - customs are designed to sustain relationships
    - living in harmony with nature, as opposed to controlling and destroying it
    - respecting the laws of nature, as opposed to what scientific data shows
    - being self-caring and self-sufficient, not dependent on others
    - honoring the laws of the Creator, not of the state
    - learning as a child, to see all things as inter-connected and dedicating yourself to connecting in respectful and caring ways to everything around you, at every moment, in every activity (p. 43)

In his text *"Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice"* (1996), Ross shares a teaching from an Ojibway Elder regarding his western dependence on hierarchies of worth and power. For example, the Elder was sharing with him teachings from the forest. "In the forest, she explained, there were so many different trees, bushes and grasses, insects, birds and animals. You would not compare the worth of the white pine tree with the worth of the blue jay. You would not compare the worth of the juniper bush with the worth of the frog. They were all necessary for that place to continue in health. They were all sacred." (p. 53)

Our point is that often we judge the world (and in this case Indigenous people' drinking and driving challenges) from a western perspective. Given the negative stereotypes, racism, and discrimination that Indigenous people are faced with on a daily basis, drinking and driving is just one more challenging issue that needs to be understood in a larger context.

Our challenge in this section of the study is to lend some understanding to the complexity of drinking and driving. Like the teachings of the forest, there is much more to be understood beyond what the naked eye sees.

Historical Evidence of Conflicted World-Views and Agendas

Many who choose to drink (and drive) do so without understanding their intricate connection to *historic trauma* and their current realities, and thus the "collective generational shame" that shapes their behaviors. We believe that the necessary healing journey in many First Nations is in its infancy stages, thus many people do not understand at this point in their lives how their current behaviors may be linked to the inter-generational impacts of residential school. Ross (1996), an Assistant Crown

Attorney, explored Aboriginal approaches to justice and life in general and shared the following on the different perspectives of *wrongdoing:*

> Probably one of the most serious gaps in the system is the different perception of wrongdoing and how to best treat it. In the non-Indian community, committing a crime seems to mean that the individual is a *bad person* and therefore must be punished…. The Indian communities view a wrongdoing as *a misbehaviour which requires teaching or an illness which requires healing.* (Ross, 1996, p. 5)

Evidence of Indigenous "oppression and marginalization" is well documented. For example, in 1894, Sir John A. MacDonald introduced the original Indian Act saying; "Indian children should be taken away from their parents so as to eliminate their barbarian influence and expose the children to the benefits of civilization. The teacher has been sent out as an educational missionary to introduce cultural changes in Indian societies" (Pauls, 1996, p. 36). Then, in the early 1900's, Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent of the Indian Department, was noted as saying, "Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and therein no Indian question" (York, 1990, p. 23). Both MacDonald and Scott were agents of government that had different beliefs about Indigenous people, and their connectedness to the land.

To this day, we believe that the conflicting world-views are impacting Indigenous families, including those yet to be born. This is best shared in research done by the Assembly of First Nations noting the long-term impacts of contact:

> …. Indigenous social and cultural devastation in the present is the result of unremitting personal and collective trauma due to demographic collapse, resulting from early influenza and smallpox epidemics and other infectious diseases, conquest, warfare, slavery, colonization, proselytization, famine and starvation, the 1892 to the late 1960s residential school period and forced assimilation. These experiences left

> Indigenous cultural identities reeling with what can be regarded as an endemic and complex form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2004, p. 1)

Furthermore, the authors of the study add this historical perspective:

> Aboriginal people have experienced unremitting trauma and post-traumatic effects since Europeans reached the New World and unleashed a series of contagions among the Indigenous population. These contagions burned across the entire continent from the southern to northern hemispheres over a four hundred year timeframe, killing up to 90 percent of the continental Indigenous population and rendering Indigenous people physically, spiritually, emotionally and psychically traumatized by deep and unresolved grief. (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2004, p.iii)

Finally, the authors noted, "in short, historic trauma causes deep breakdowns in social functioning that may last for many years, decades and even generations" (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2004, p.iv). It is on this premise that we outline the complexities of drinking and driving amongst First Nation communities in 2005. It should be noted too, that we lay no blame, but simply identify documented Indigenous research as a counter spin to western perspective around the complex issue of drinking and driving.

What is Historic Trauma and Intergenerational Grief?

In 2004, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation identified historic trauma and intergenerational grief as:

> The experience of historic trauma and inter-generational grief can best be described as psychological baggage being passed from parents to children with the trauma and grief experienced in each individual's lifetime. . . . . Unresolved historic trauma will continue to impact individuals, families and communities until the trauma has been addressed mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually. (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2004, p. 3)

The researchers go on to share how this trauma is hurting families, noting, "Aboriginal people are not only suffering from the impacts of generational grief, they are

acting it out at personal and cultural levels and recreating trauma as a way of life. . . . . it is evidenced in the high incidence of lateral violence, family breakdown and community dysfunction" (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2004, p. 3).

Oprah Winfrey summarizes the effects of long-term woundedness succinctly noting, "If you don't heal the wounds of your childhood, you bleed into the future" (Human Connections Counseling Services, 2005). We believe that the experiences (personal stories) of those choosing to drink and drive may fall within this realm. Without realizing it, these "carriers of historic trauma" are engaging in dangerously harmful behaviors to themselves, their families, and everyone else around them when they participate in such activities.

What We Don't Know Can and Does Hurt Us!

The depth and complexity of Indigenous people's history and our current state of social and economic development must be studied in the larger context. In the words of the Late Cree Elder John Blackned:

> Spiritual authenticity is not possible without fidelity to the past. 'Fidelity' here denotes not sentimentality, but a kind of deliberate *attention* to reality that, while having 'no one version,' contains, perhaps paradoxically, emotional, psychological, and social truths that are inextricably linked with the present and future. (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2004, p. 90, citing Preston, 1999, p. 156)

Furthermore, Alanis Obomsawin, uses the medium of film to articulate the importance of understanding our Indigenous past in order to understand our present reality. She emphasizes the importance of Indigenous *voice,* something that has not been readily explored for many*:*

> The basic purpose is for our people to have a voice. To be heard is the important thing, no matter what it is we're talking about…and that we have a lot of [sic] offer our society. But we also have to look at the bad

> stuff, and what has happened to us, and why…We cannot do this without going through the past, and watching ourselves and analyzing ourselves, because we're carrying a pain that is 400 hundred years old. We don't just carry out everyday pain. We're carrying the pain of our fathers, our mother[s], our grandfathers, our grandmothers – it's part of the land. (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2004, p. 87 citing Alioff and Schouten Levine, 1987, p. 13)

Like Obomsawin, some Elders say we carry the collective pain of our ancestors often referring to this as "blood memory." This being the case, how does the study of drinking and driving fit into this context?

Voices of Those Who Attended Residential School

In 1994, the Assembly of First Nations undertook research from "residential school survivors'" perspectives about their lived, voiced experiences. One such survivor shared one of his experiences:

> It was the first year I was in residential school. We were all going up to our rooms in a line when something happened. I didn't know what it was but it was something major. I was scared and confused. So the next day we were all down lined up around this big room. I didn't know too much about lining up, I was just learning, so I remember being surprised at how many boys there were lined up—standing all round the walls of this room. We filled all the walls. The priests and brothers were talking and I didn't get what they were saying. I didn't understand their words. And then three boys came in and they were stripped. They were completely naked. Then they were tied. I was looking at this. I didn't know what was going on. I thought it was a joke. They were standing and spread out just like you see in the movies. Then I saw a supervisor with a big whip and then the boys were whipped one by one. I mean seriously whipped. I don't remember anything after that…. And I always thought it was a dream until a couple years ago I went to visit a cousin of mine and we were just talking….I got to telling him about this "dream" that I had. And he said, "It was not a dream. It was me. I was one of those guys. We ran away and got caught". So then I asked him if they were tied up and he said "yes". I went over all the details in my "dream". I was shocked. It wasn't a dream. I had made it into a dream…. It had happened but I'd always thought it was a dream…. (Assembly of First Nations, 1994, p. 69)

Another survivor, 49-year-old Millie remembers how she suffered physical abuse at the hands of her drunken father. She shared, "From the time I was five-years-old I saw

the black eyes and the beatings my father laid on my mother when he was drinking. Then he'd leave and we'd have nothing to eat. Mom had no way to keep food on the table. …." (Assembly of First Nations, 1994, p. 66).

Another survivor remembers coming home after being away at residential school:

> I pictured home as it was when I left for the residential school. I pictured Mom and Dad as kind and loving and us all doing family things together as we did before. But while I was gone things changed. My dad started drinking… my Dad changed too … he was very violent. Before, he used to work all the time, but now he didn't work. There was hardly any food in the house, so I became a provider. I did everything. I was a hunter, trapper, everything, and going to school at the same time. (Assembly of First Nations, 1994, p. 100)

Not only did individuals experience direct mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical abuse, but often they perpetuated that cycle.

Traditionally, women played an important role in Indigenous society because many tribes were matriarchal. After contact, women's roles changed significantly since many visitors to the New World practiced patriarchy (another aspect of differing world-views). This patriarchal world-view displaced many tribal societies of their traditional governance structures, and it is still being experienced in our current Indigenous political structures. This legislatively enforced patriarchal and alien world-view explains the abuse so prevalent in male – female relationships today:

> What I attribute to the residential school experience was…how I related to women. I was really an abusive person. I didn't know how to interact with women. I didn't know how to behave with them… I thought women were there to be used. Women were not something that you respected. Women were there to be conquered and you conquered and used them anyway you could…I was extremely disrespectful to women. (Assembly of First Nations, 1994, p. 103)

Today, we continue to experience family and community disintegration and disharmony. One way we still experience our own internalized oppression is in our

segregated, confused, and conflicted state of prayer. Research indicates that those suffering the impacts of colonization[3] become the colonizers, or in our case, the neo-colonizers. Our point is best demonstrated through the words of one residential school survivor who shares this conflict around Christian versus traditional forms of prayer:

> Where I come from, we end up in big arguments all the time about how to go about helping ourselves… There are the Christians on one side and then the (Native) "traditionalists" on another and it ends up that we're all trying to say that our way is right…. Sometime it gets so bad that people won't even talk with each other. This whole business of who's right and wrong even splits up families…. (Assembly of First Nations, 1994, p. 115)

Many argue that we need to look to the future and forget about the past, but our Elders teach us that we must understand the past in order to move forward in a healing way. We must learn from the past or we run the risk of perpetuating the pain of the past. This is best understood in the words of Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, writers for the Assembly of First Nations study *Historic Trauma and Aboriginal Healing* (2004):

> Perhaps now it is time for a descent into the deeper depths of historic despair where Indigenous people can make their way back through memories, oral traditions, written words and deeper sorrows. Then, Indigenous people can collectively create newer understandings and go willingly through the painful memories, once again, in order to resolve and release the historic trauma and free themselves from its tyranny. (p. 91)

Leroy Standing Bear, a residential school survivor, speaks to the importance of learning from the past. He shares his opinion regarding the intergenerational transmission of historic trauma: "By and large the procedure was successful, although the legacy of damaged minds and crippled souls it left in its wake is as yet untold. Psychic numbing, Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, battered wife syndrome, suicide, alcoholism,

[3] the establishment of settlements (AFN, 2004, p.i)

ennui – are there any names for psychecide?" (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2004, p. 1).

Another survivor shares some of her experiences regarding the inter-generational effects of historical trauma:

> We met with a counselor in my dad's trailer every Wednesday evening for sixteen weeks. We would talk about how we were as children, about how we felt when we saw my dad beating up my mom, how we felt when we had to leave to go to residential and what happened there; everything, everything, came out. We had never seen our dad show emotion. He broke down and cried. One meeting he went to each of us and he told us what he remembered about each of us and how much he loved us. It was very painful. There was a lot of straightforward confrontation… We all cried and cried too. But for the first time, I felt close to everyone; my brothers and sisters and my dad…. (Assembly of First Nations, 1994, p. 133)

Some Indigenous people do not fully understand the implications of residential school and how this collective experience of trauma has affected their family relationships to this day. In the words of a colleague, there exists a "crisis of disbelief". In other words, we often do not believe in our own abilities, or potential because of our experiences related to residential school. This is reiterated by an Elder cited in *Historic Trauma and Aboriginal Healing* (2004) who notes:

> Our dignity was taken away … and a lot of people don't realize that. They don't really understand about how our dignity was taken away from us, how we were taught to be ashamed to be Natives. Then our self-respect was gone. Once you lost your self-respect, how can you respect someone else? Then you take your frustrations out on other people. (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2004, p. 92, citing Ellerby and Ellerby, 1998, p.ix-x)

So, what happens when people do not believe they have voice, or believe in self and community? Another Elder in the study *Historic Trauma and Aboriginal Healing* (2004) shares the impacts of two worlds clashing:

> In the early days, when our families and communities were ripped apart by colonialism, when our communities were disintegrating and you had kids taken away from the parents, the children removed and put into residential schools or missions, then you had parents who were already into alcoholism, you had grandparents of that same generation that were stripped from the practice of their ceremonies, their spirituality. (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2004, p. 92, citing Ellerby and Ellerby, 1998, p.x)

Dr. Marie Battiste of the Mi'kmaq Nation recognizes the need for Indigenous people to reclaim "fully actualized selves":

> Recognized as the foundation for their future. But we are not whole yet, having been diminished by our past, and we do not know who will articulate that future, that new story. Aboriginal government? Aboriginal politicians? Elders? Educators? The responsibility ultimately rests with Aboriginal people themselves in a continuing journey of collaboration and negotiation, healing and rebuilding, creating and experimenting, and visioning and celebrating. (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2004, p. 92, citing Battiste, 2000, p.ix)

A very important aspect of becoming fully actualized selves is individual readiness. Alcohol and one's choice to drink and drive is also a choice about "readiness" to look at our past, and recognize how that "past" might be a contributing factor in our current makeup. We are not at that place in our communities (on a large scale) where those suffering "historic trauma" recognize how we can get out of that state of "substance abuse".

According to the study *'Breaking the Silence: An Interpretive Study of Residential School Impact and Healing As Illustrated by the Stories of First Nations Individuals'* survivors experience a sense of being lost, staying silent, staying alone, and working hard. This comes out of their multiple losses including loss of memory, innocence, meaning, family, connection, language, childhood, feeling, pride, community,

identity, trust, confidence, spirit, skills, morality, life, and control. (Assembly of First Nations, 1994, p. 167).

The choice to address healing involves our need to "recognize, remember, resolve and reconnect" (Assembly of First Nations, 1994). One survivor shares just how important this is: "Looking back, I can see how going any deeper before I did would have just thrown me into a real spin. I had to be sober for several years and feel some kind of stability as far as living day-to-day was concerned before I was ready to really look into how mad and hurt I was by what happened to me in residential school" (Assembly of First Nations, 1994, p. 128).

In order to reconstruct Indigenous history around residential school and its impacts today, we need to embrace healing that includes personal change and personal choice. As one participant in the study *Historic Trauma and Aboriginal Healing* shared:

> We are given choices. Which ones are we going to make? Where do we see our lives taking us? And what about the little ones and the ones still to come? I think it is time to begin the deepest search within ourselves for the coming generations … They are coming into new understanding with their new thoughts and many of them are coming with a good, clean mind. (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2004, p. 88, citing Johnson and Budnick, 1994, p. 92)

Where To? When Does the Healing Begin?

Morrisseau (2002), in his book "*Into the Daylight: A Wholistic Approach to Healing*" identifies 4 ways we deal with our pain:

1. we can run away from it
2. we can numb, or repress the memories, or deny it
3. we can fight it, wage war against ourselves, our families, or society

4. or we can deal with our pain: deal with it, learn from it, help others who are experiencing similar traumas, and ultimately, making the pain "our friend"

Morrisseau identifies one aspect of a "wholistic approach to healing," which he believes involves the interconnectedness of the individual, the family and the community. We agree. Dealing with the complex issue of drinking and driving (and other abuse issues) cannot be dealt with in isolation. In the Indigenous community, individuals are connected to other individuals, some biologically, some through extended family relationships (and this is clear in the Cree language kinship system). Thus, young interact with old, old with young, unlike many urban, nuclear families where those connections may not exist.

Morrisseau believes the individual must first take responsibility for his or her own feelings, body, sexuality, and breath. Secondly, we must take responsibility for the family in the areas of communication, eating, intimacy, and respect. And finally, our community responsibilities for the collective members include play, purpose, and values (p. 74-80).

If we look at Morrisseau's work, could the issue of drinking and driving be at the stage of finding "one of the 4 identified ways of dealing with pain?"

Conclusion

This study on drinking and driving in Horizon First Nation cannot simply be looked at as a "surface issue" when analyzing the data. Again, we reiterate the complexity of the issue. We are only beginning to skim the surface of the long-term inter-generational impacts of residential school. In some ways, our community is just

beginning to wake-up, and this is witnessed in the collective effort to share personal stories related to the pain of seeing our loved ones experiencing the pain of substance abuse. Substance abuse is not only impacting their personal lives, but the lives of their children, their extended families, their friends, and the larger Nation.

The point about community healing and residential school impacts can be taken out of another context. On May 15, 2005, the Edmonton Sun ran an article about the gangs in Hobbema. Like Horizon, Hobbema is plagued with historic-related trauma. Reti, a First Nation police officer reiterates:

> These are the children of the post-residential school era. Their parents were ripped from their home communities by a school system built to assimilate them by force into white culture. Beaten for every word of Cree they spoke, they're the lost generation of Canada's native communities – plagued by drug and alcohol addictions and frequently incapable of giving their own kids love and guidance. (p. 33)

The article concludes with "our culture is our strength. All we have to do is remember who we are" (p. 33).

Finally, we suggest that much more long term research needs to be done that addresses the multiple risk factors facing the majority of most Indigenous communities (youth populations in most First Nations make up around 50% depending on the Nation). The AADAC documents, "*An Overview of Risk and Protective Factors: The Alberta Youth Experience Survey, 2002", "Summary Report: The Alberta Youth Experience Survey 2002*", and "AADAC *Core Business Plan*," outline areas that future research could address along with the inclusion of a strong cultural component. Some multiple risk factors that must be considered in the future include:

1. Individual risk factors include alienation, rebelliousness, lack of bonding to society, association with friends who drink, use drugs, gamble, favorable attitudes toward alcohol/other drugs/gambling, early initiation into these behaviours, personality factors (sensation seeking).
2. Family risk factors include family history of addiction, family problems, and family conflict.

3. School risk factors include low expectations from teachers of student achievement.
4. Community risk factors include availability of drugs, community norms favorable toward drug use, community disorganization, severe economic deprivation, pro-use messages in the media (we all want to live in a beer commercial…).

Again, we reiterate that the study of drinking and driving is far more complex, and we suggest that that this study is the start of something with much positive potential. The resolution will come from "within" the Nation. For long-term healing programs to occur and impact everyone, it must be the community that steps forward. This study is just the beginning of scratching the surface of a much larger "journey of healing" yet to come.

FINDINGS

As described in the description of historical context, a fundamental component of drinking and driving is the relationship that participants have with drinking and driving. The talk was extensive, tapping on different life episodes, experiences, and points of view. The narratives produced by participants revealed not only answers to the questions asked, but detailed social accounts and valuable cultural knowledge for understanding people's lives, and drinking and driving.

WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO DRINKING AND DRIVING?

The opening question was intended to be an insightful introduction to the relationship First Nations individuals has with drinking and driving. The question was purposefully open-ended, designed to promote thoughtful and in-depth discourse about personal involvement with drinking and driving. The responses were emotionally charged and passionately presented. A review of the transcripts presented a number of relevant themes that cut across the lives of participants. The themes arising from the discourse helped introduce the sense of person, family, community, and culture, as related to drinking and driving.

Relationship with Drinking and Driving Marked by History of Personal Crisis

The relationship is offered in terms of history. First Nations' young people have a long history, marked with strong episodes of extreme pain and trauma. The stories suggest that the relationship some First Nations people have with drinking and driving begins at an early age, at the time when their grandparents were involved in alcohol abuse

and drunk driving. Participants were youngsters who innocently drove with their drunken grandparents. They experienced some severe incidents one of which was involvement in a severe crash. Other experiences are with other members of the family, where, for example, a young woman aged 26 experienced her aunt being involved in drunk driving. Six of her family members died at the scenes of vehicle crashes.

Such incidents leave scars, some to the extent that a re-play of earlier death and maiming could once again happen. Although the young people experienced or witnessed severe trauma early in their lives, still they became involved in alcohol abuse and drunk driving:

> *...My relationship with drinking and driving started like, when I was very young, like my grandfather used to drink and drive when me and my grandmother and my little brother used to be in the vehicle with them, well with him. And when I was seven years old my Auntie got into a car accident and she died. And she was with a whole bunch of her friends, there was like seven people in that vehicle and they all died in that accident and she left behind two little boys, and a three year old, well her son was going to be turning three and a baby that was only four months old and she was 27 when she passed away…*
> *When I first met my husband or common law, we used to go out like every weekend and he never had his license and I had my license and we'd go to town and we'd party like at the bar and we'd come home and I'd be drinking, like I'd be drunk and we'd drive home, like we did this for months…*

The young woman expressed an unresolved grief, an experience of personal violence that she herself later acted out. She personified a kind of disconnection between early intense experiences with her family and later actions. She was caught in a pattern of self-destructive behavior that was role modeled for her by her grandparents and extended family members.

Another participant spoke about her early experiences with drunken driving, where she used to drive drunken people home. She was eighteen, didn't have a driver's

license and received a number of traffic tickets. She graduated to drinking alcohol and driving. The early acquaintance with drinking and driving became announced when she also had an experience of death at the hands of a drinking driver. Her six-year-old sister was riding her bike with a group of children. A company vehicle, driven by a drunk driver hit and killed her:

> *I had a little sister, she died from a drunk driver. She got hit by a, um, truck, truck was coming, she was driving her bike and the truck didn't see her. She came out from behind a vehicle, actually a bus, and the truck hit her. Um, it was really, it was really um, wasn't fair how she died or wasn't like, it wasn't time for her to go. She was so young. She was the baby of the family. There was seven of us, um, the cops, I guess, generalized it as a Native girl, no helmet, on her bike, on the wrong side of town, um, let the guy go, let him go home. He was driving a company vehicle, he was coming from work stopped at the bar and went home but didn't make it all the way home. The cops didn't charge him, they charged him with faulty brakes a vehicle that wasn't um, not road conditions, they charged him with something like that. Um, that night my sister was with a lot, a lot of other kids on their bikes. She was the last one in a group of six that were on bikes um, I'm glad that none of those other kids got hit because you know like, my Mom was so, she wanted to ask questions, she wanted to know why, she wanted to know where and she was always harassing these kids ay, and these kids were so young and they didn't understand and um, I'm just glad it wasn't somebody else's kid because I could imagine how much we would have been harassed.*

The woman's account suggests special treatment for the driver, a potential interpretation of racism. In a thoughtful manner, the participant wondered whether the driver was not charged because he was driving a company car and the child was "Native" not riding her bike safely.

Later the woman was, in her own words, "*drinking a lot*." But the use of alcohol was mixed with the use of illegal drugs. As before, drinking and driving was not an isolated behavior. The lady was trying to escape reality, drank liquor, smoked drugs, and the police charged her on several occasions. She had two sons at the time.

Losing a brother or sister is a major life issue, especially if that brother led a high-risk lifestyle whereby drinking and driving was typical:

> *I was just young when me and my two oldest brothers used to take my parent's vehicle like, they'd drink all day and they'd pass out at like three o'clock in the afternoons. Before they would pass out they would like take a cord off the car and motor. So we won't take off with their vehicle but we'd always end up finding that part for it and we would leave with their vehicle and get people to ride with us places, like more for beers and [sigh] Well, my oldest brother died ?? That's why I, I don't drive at all anymore. I lost my oldest brother from drinking and driving… I don't know how to s// look back when all the times my oldest brothers used to take the vehicles from my parents [sigh] and I realized that we could have got into accidents with other people. I don't know.*

Watching a brother die immediately in the aftermath of a major crash adds another layer of meaning to the event. The image is profound, and the emotions are raw. The observing brother watches helplessly as EMS attendants try to save the person's life. That person was drunk, and this was not the first time that it happened. As described before, the dramatic episode was the final one of a series of episodes of drinking and driving:

> *My brother-in-law comes over and he starts, he's running around hysterically saying that my bro// my second oldest brother was in an accident and I thought well it ?? experience and I never knew he drink and drove and I thought 'Well, ya, he's been in so many accidents before, it'll be the same, the same as like last time'. So I went, it was just me, my, my brothers and sisters were on the// my Mom and Dad were in (XXX), they lived in (XXX). And I got there and it's a group to drive me up. We were driving to, the sou// the south road, just on the other side of the creek and we got there and I'm seeing there's a Cara// a van, the whole roof is smashed in. For some reason I didn't want to go so they pushed me to go and as, as I was walking I seen so many people laying, there was seven people. There was two people lying about 10 meters away from the van and I know my brother,he's a big man, and I seen him and they were trying to cut a hole in throat for a trachea, like just laying there, looking at him, it was like a bad dream. Seeing the paramedics rush trying to cut his throat. For him to live//… the paramedics said he was gone.*

Again, an extended family member died at the hands of a drinking driver, when a lady's cousin was killed by a drunk driver that rear-ended her car:

> *I lost a cousin to drunk driving, she was my first cousin. Lost her in 1996 she rolled in her um, well she wasn't driving she was sitting in the passengers side and there was six of them in that vehicle. And they got hit from behind and she flew out of the side window and the vehicle fell over her.*

Although family death and maiming directly related to drinking and driving dominated the landscape, other troublesome experiences were also noted. The most obvious was that interviewees were drunk and crashed their vehicle. It was memorable, but not life threatening. Someone was drunk, crashed the vehicle, and dealt with dramatic circumstances afterwards – namely passing or tuning out of the event, or getting help after the participant hit a fence, house deck, road sign or ditch. For example, the young woman who hit another resident's fence and deck stopped the vehicle two feet from the water. She fell asleep! Later she walked and sought help. Unfortunately she forgot where she parked the vehicle and had to search for it. Also she was unaware of the damage she caused:

> *I was driving around. I ended getting lost, I didn't know where the hell I was. I was by a beach resort or something and I was lost. I took out a fence, I drove for two feet from the water's edge before I turned the vehicle. I hit another, I hit somebody's deck. Took down the deck and then it hit the fence and I hit a tree and that's when I stopped. Then a, I (2) it was like early in the morning and I didn't even know where the hell I was so I thought, 'Ok, I'm already in trouble' I just left my vehicle and I got??? I'll just sleep here no one will notice any way. It doesn't matter any way. It didn't matter if I woke up or I didn't. Then um, huh, morning came. I didn't even sleep, I was kind of sleep, didn't sleep. Ok, I'm stuck. I started walking and this white guy gave me a ride. Brought me to the bar where I started and I called my husband and I told him, "I was in an accident, and I lost the vehicle I didn't know where it is." I said a, "I just now sobered up and, I lost it when I was drunk and can come and help me." So he did. And we went to that, we went there, we, we went looking*

for that vehicle because for the life of me I couldn't remember where the hell I parked the car. And we found it and I just really freaked out because I totaled that fence I took down their deck and I was like two feet from the water's edge and I took down another fence and I was parked in front of a tree.

Of all the groups that affect the lives of young people, none touches them so intimately and continuously as does the family. Psychological literature is replete with evidence that parents provide the greatest learning experiences for children. Parents teach the young right from wrong, good from bad, what to desire and what to disdain. Much of the teaching happens through modeling where parents behave normally and children learn through unobtrusive observation. When children repeatedly witness their parents drink alcohol and then drive afterwards, they easily internalize the prevailing behavior as being acceptable. If there is an alcoholic in the house, the only drinking pattern the children may see is "alcoholic drinking", a theme that was well defined by the participants in the Sharing Circle. They were not reticent to discuss the impact immediate/extended family members had on their alcohol consumption patterns, in the sense that "*what is okay for parents is okay for me*."

The parent modeling principle was featured as an important contributor to the young person's involvement in drinking and driving:

I never really lost anybody close but growing up I always seen it because my Dad always used to do it, he would a, he would always come pick me up, he would be drinking and driving. I was just a little, a little guy at time so that's why I thought I was all right because I seen him do it lots.

Seeing and being with parents while drinking can make a profound impact. It did on a twenty-three-year-old woman, who at the age of thirteen could not get home to bed because her parents were still drinking at 3:00 AM in the back of a business in which she worked part-time. She needed to go to school the next day. Her story took on a twist

when her father drove her home and left her mother at the store. On her way home, the mother totaled the car, without receiving a bruise. The event defined the participant's relationship to drinking and driving:

> *When I was 13 I used to (*work at*…) in Horizon. My parents were really good friends with the (*bosses*) and they used to drink all the time in the back while I used to work…during weekend, during evenings and after school. And one time it was like three o'clock in the morning and I had school the next day so (3) I told my Dad "Let's go, I want to go home." And your Mom doesn't want to leave yet. "So I don't care, just leave her. She always wants to drink any ways, just leave her." He listened and he brought me home. An hour later um, cops were at my place and (2) my Mom took off with this car, she rolled [sobbing] and I felt so guilty cause, and I still do to this day actually. [sobbing] I just felt like it was so my fault. But she didn't even get like, one bruise and that car was so totaled it was// She rolled (it). She was trying to come home but she was going every way and I felt like it was all my fault.*

The situation in question was not just a crash, but that the young woman felt guilty for it. That sense of guilt for the actions of others and for others who were victimized or victimizers through drinking and driving was commonly shared. There was grief for the death or injury, but there was also personal blame for not doing something. Often members of the Sharing Circle spoke of how they could have done something. They should have been in the moment so that they could have supported the victim before or after the crash. There was a strong sense of speakers taking personal responsibility for the actions of others. With tears in their eyes, they talked about actions that could have been taken to avoid the trauma. This sense of responsibility for the well being of parents reflects a familiar pattern in alcoholic family systems where role reversals are quite common.

A familiar example of role reversal is an older child assuming a parentified role due to the emotional unavailability of parents and therefore assumes the role of caretaker

in relationship to her siblings. In this particular case, the participant, in telling her Dad how to behave ("Mom …. She always wants to drink anyways, just leave her") is - at the age of 13 - on an equal footing with her parents. Even more telling is that she is more concerned about her schooling then her parents. Added to her responsibilities as a student, sibling caretaker, and parent caretaker at the age of 13, is her personal sense of responsibility for the accident her mother subsequently gets into due to her drunken state. Her guilt haunts her to this day.

The extent of parental involvement in the young person's introduction to drinking and driving was not only role modeling, but also role demand. That is, the parents, while engaged in drinking and driving, demand things of their children that are dangerous, and which makes it easier for parents to continue drinking. The children are forced to abet their actions, regardless of legality and risk. In one case, a young woman, unlicensed and under the age of 16 at the time, would be forced to drive for her drunken parents:

> *When I was younger, I used to drive a lot for um, well, my parents drink a lot, when I was younger, sometimes they still do, but when I was younger they'd make me drive for them, like I'd have to go to (Town X) and drive with, I don't know, they'd just be yelling and screaming, and, I wasn't that experienced, but I learned how and I don't know but, I, I thought about what if I get pulled over, I don't even// I never even had my learners.*

Although it was common for the young girl to drive her inebriated parents, there was a time in Saskatchewan when she felt especially vulnerable and angry. Her parents "*were drunk*". So she had to drive her parents a long distance home, while they were screaming at her:

> *And then, there was another time in Saskatchewan, my parents were drunk and they wanted to come home, come back to Horizon, so I drove and [sigh] of course there was screaming and everything. It was a really old car and it looked like it was 'E' but I don't know, it was surprising that we*

made it home. And I, I don't know it's, I was so mad at them for making me do that.

Although the young woman became a designated driver of sorts for the parents, still the mother eventually got into a serious collision when she was an impaired driver. Once again we witness role reversal (a child ensuring the safety of her parents) in response to the role demand of drunken parents.

But it did not stop there! The young woman's parents had her become an accomplice in a robbery attempt. Her father forced her to drive two men, who subsequently robbed a liquor store while she was waiting in the car. As she described in her own voice:

There was a time when I was 16, my Dad wanted me to drive and there was these two guys that wanted meto take them to (Town X) , and I didn't know they didn't have no money and they just, I guess they just got out of jail or something and, I got there and this guys like "Leave your, leave the car running." So I did. And he went in the liquor store and he came running out and I guess, he just robbed that store and I was the one driving and he was telling me to 'go' and I was just freak// I was freaking out, so I did and I don't know. Like I just thought I was// like I was driving, I was, like I said, running from the cops. Like a, they were, now I think about it now, I think pretty selfish of them to put me in that situation. Like, I didn't even know that that's what they were going to do, those two people. And then I was, you know, my Dad kept telling me to stop at all these houses because they wanted cigarettes. And when I stopped at this, well at the last house that I stopped at, I, I thought it was um, a, a driveway and I got stuck and the police came and then those guys ran out and, I don't know, they found them and I told those police everything and…

The young woman was angry with her father for taking advantage of her. He brought her into a line of unlawful behavior at an early age. Bearing in mind the theme of inter-generational trauma discussed in the introduction, we ask the reader to pause for a moment and reflect on the experience of this participant's story. In a sense, we ask, you the reader to be "in the skin" of a child in an alcoholic family environment: feel her guilt,

anger, fear, and terror, and immerse yourself in her shame and her family's shame. What is it like to be a child growing up in such a toxic mix of emotions day in and day out? Since a child's developmental sense of self is inextricably linked to the parent's self-image, what kind of an adult do you become? How does this life experience prepare you to be parents of the next generation? What responsibility should the father carry?

The experiences offered by young people described trauma and loss in a family or a community. The heart is heavy. It became evident from the Sharing Circle discussions that the loss, anger, sorrow, and fear needs to be acknowledged and processed. A healing needs to take place.

Relationship with Drinking and Driving Marked by Police Involvement

A dominant marker for defining the relationship between a First Nations participant and drinking and driving is the involvement or non-involvement of the police. Because drinking and driving is typically discussed as being prevalent in the community, there appears to be a reasonable chance or probability for drinking drivers to be apprehended by the police. Young people routinely spoke of experiences when they were caught by the police, questioned, locked up for the night in jail, charged, searched, and/or warned. An impression was left that negative or critical incident contact with the local RCMP is normal – something that is expected, but needs to be avoided. But avoidance did not mean to stop drinking and driving. Rather it meant taking evasive action when or shortly after they have been drinking and driving. "Escape" or attempted escape from the law, sometimes leading to police chases often happen. Witness the following descriptions:

> *All I remember is the cops coming over and asking for my keys. So, I gave him the keys. I didn't want to get out of the vehicle and then I sat there and*

they were checking out the insurance, they took my driver's and the insurance and I had an extra set of keys so I started the car and the cop jumped out right away and he was, he was trying to grab me out of the car and I was locking the door and I was fighting and he was like "You got to get in the back of the car." And I wouldn't and I was just// I was being really not cooperative and (2) after all of that struggle when he did get me back in the car, into the cop car, he was, he wanted me to blow and he was telling me "Well, if you don't we're going to take you to the cop shop.

I used to drink and drive a lot and every time people would get in with me I'm like "You guys know I'm drunk and if the cops come I'll slow down enough for you guys to jump out and I'm going to out run them…

They (police) set up all the spike belt, and we ended up getting the dogs pulled on us and he got me pretty bad, I had to get a tetanus shot because of that. But we didn't care cause we were just impaired, we were just young, young and stupid I guess.

Police involvement was in the participants' minds, whether it represented a negative experience of contact, or an event where there was no police, but could have been. The comments expressed that there was no optimal balance between local First Nations people and the local police detachment. For example, a young woman was sober, cruising with friends, not breaking any laws. She was stopped by the police. As she described, there was limited respect of individual rights and equal treatment:

And we cruising around and we were trying to find a party and there was a lot of cops out that night so we went to ?? there was a party happening there and there was two entrances so the police came in and they hit one of the entrances and the other one was waiting for us at the other so they were chasing us out of there and I got, I got stopped and it just so happened it was a rookie drive// a rookie cop and he was really 'gung ho' and he was yelling ay, "Stop your vehicle." He was just really freaking out cause he was, he must have been scared of meeting up with Native people. So I told him "You don't have yell at me." And he goes "Yes, I do. You're not listening." I said, "I'm right here in front of you. You don't have to yell at me." and he said, "Are you drinking?" "No." and then he said, "Are people in your vehicle drinking?" and I said, "Ya, they are." and he asked to see my license and he's freaking out all over the place. He's yelling at me and then I just like "Well, hey, I'm not drunk and my friends are, they are drinking but you don't need to yell at me, I'm right here in front of you." So (2) he was still kind of freaky. See, he gave me, he gave me my a, a ticket, send me on my way.

It seemed that policing served as a benchmark for judging the relationship a participant has/had with drinking and driving. For example:

> *We've been very lucky that we never go into a car accidents, like very lucky that I never got pulled over by the cops or got the car taken away or got my license taken way. I'm very lucky to be here.*

A young person from Horizon getting pulled over by the police can be a complex issue. After careful analysis of the Sharing Circle transcripts, several questions come to mind: Do the local police look for certain driver behaviors and make random stops, regardless of race, color or religion? Or do the police pre-select/pre-screen cars for further investigation on the basis of stereotypical signs like race, color, maintenance of vehicle, number of passengers in the vehicle, etc.? Or do they check license plate numbers on their computers? These questions reflect potential police targeting! They should be further addressed. There is insufficient information to focus on this theme. But, a relevant factor in the debate is that whenever the police stopped Sharing Circle participants, the latter had indeed been consuming alcohol or driving in a fashion that warranted a stop. A young man spoke about his drinking and driving experiences and like so many others, the police received a significant amount of his attention:

> *From all the times I drove impaired I only got pulled over once and the cop that pulled us over there's a, I was with a carload full of friends and just told him everybody's drunk, in fact I was the drunkest one out of all of them, and he just let us go cause I told him I was sober and he didn't even realize that I was drunk. I felt lucky about that though. And another time too when my cousin, he came to see me in (Town X not in Alberta), I used to live in (Town X not in Alberta), where the town used to powwow, he just got his trust fund, and he partied for like a week. Drinking, driving all around BC and I don't know, he got nabbed at the boarder coming back by from (Town Y) or past the boarder he get, he had a pound of marijuana and he got busted. He got into two high speed chases with the cops and then (X) got away cause my cousin's new road's there…*

It appears that drinking and driving late at night on weekends around the Town X area is so prominent that random police stops or routine observation of driver behaviors increases the chance of detecting impaired drivers. The issue becomes clearer with the following responses that express how the driving style, or for that matter, the nature of driving after drinking alcohol late at night, is such that police officers in a small town take notice and subsequent action. Several accounts are:

> *...I drive them around sometimes, when I was, I was, well I'm 12 over, intoxicated and I, I went through a stop sign. The cop caught me.*
>
> *As a celebration the team asked me to go party with them. So I wanted to go party with them, I thought "Why not?" first time, just try it out. But one thing I never thought of was having a designated driver so, by the time I was intoxicated I had to drive home and things were going pretty bad, there was cops everywhere. I was pretty, like pretty much paranoid. I did everything I can to stay away from the cops, I went through back alleys, I went through, on the way from the party I went through back roads and back alleys, Anything I could do to stay away from the cops. I played 'cat and mouse' with a cop.*
>
> *And I did a stupid thing once more, where I got intoxicated. But I wasn't far from where I live in the bar. I drove a few, probably six blocks away. And again there was a lot of cops out so I had to take the back alley.*

Leaving the site of an accident or in other words, hit and run is a major crime. Matters are made even worse when the driver does not have a valid driver's license and has consumed alcohol at the time. This happened to one of the young women in the Sharing Circle. She shared her memorable story of the time she was in grade 11, did not yet have her driver's license but still drove some friends to the nearby town for the school graduation celebrations. The woman's father advised her not to take the car because the muffler needed to be repaired. The young woman persisted. Finally the father relented and fixed the muffler. The young woman spoke of how she respected her family and

took responsibility for the vehicle by restricting herself to two drinks. She did not want to be an impaired driver. Unfortunately she had a minor crash with a bus. She and her friends became scared, left the scene of the accident, and went to a party where everyone became drunk. The police paid her a visit later in the week. She was afraid. According to the young woman, after her father fixed the car she,

> *...got into the car and at the time we went to the dance… It was like 11 o'clock and we went. That was the first time I ever drunk// drank and drove. I went into the bar and all the grads were having their drink, I didn't graduate that year, but all my friends did and it just gave me a reason to drink I guess and drive because I didn't want nobody driving my car cause it was under my Dad's insurance and I felt responsible, so I had one shooter and one drink. All we did was jump in the car and that was it. I didn't even look behind, I just pulled out and as I was// there was a bus, a chartered bus coming and pushed me into the parked vehicle in front of me cause I was just coming out by TD? And I// my first reaction was I started blacking out, they, they stayed in the car and I didn't. I jumped, I jumped out because I was hit in the, in the front and I jumped out and I start kicking my shoes off and screaming "Why, why?" I only had my learners at the time. So I got really scared and it was just, this bus load of baseball players and their bus driver was playing slots in bar xxx and these guys weren't even like, they didn't even have a Class 1. I didn't have a drivers license either but, I don't know. They went to go get the driver and they left town so, I was all scared [Sobbing] and I left the scene. I left my car in the middle of the road and my friends gave me a ride. [sobbing] I went straight to the party. Partied all night. People were asking me "Are you all right?" "Yea, it's all right, it's just a car." (4) I thought for sure, there was cops there too and I thought for sure like, they're going to notice me and throw me in, like they knew I was drinking like I don't know. I thought for sure but like nothing happened for week and then all of sudden the cops showed up outside my Mom's place and just me and my Dad were there (2) I went outside.*

Discussions about the police sometimes included scenarios of impaired driving and stolen vehicles. The legal problem was threefold. One, a collision happened resulting in injury. Two, the driver had consumed alcohol. Three, the vehicle was stolen.

The three features combined for a disastrous event as expressed by two of the young men in the Sharing Circle:

> *...These girls were too drunk to drive so I started driving and I went to my cousin Jim's place to see if my brother was there and he wasn't there. ?? big curve by my place in (Town M) and I lost control and I couldn't stop and I tipped over into that little slough and the two girls from Horizon got thrown from the cab and ?? were all ripped up and one of them was bleeding from the head and she had a black eye and everything, cut lip. I don't know I think I was the only one that got away clean with that because those two girls from Horizon ended up getting charged for that van being stolen and they both got air lifted to Edmonton and they brought me to Town X checked for x-rays and stuff.*
>
> *...He (brother) ended up stealing a Ford Explorer or something from (a car dealership) and he was on his way back to Horizon to see my parents before he left Edmonton but he didn't make it back all night long. He lost control of that vehicle and at a four way, that four way behind (Location B) he lost control then, hit that highway and hit the ditch and he died at the scene.*

Relationship with Drinking and Driving Marked by Community Contribution

Social problems like drinking and driving not only reflect historical events, they also interact with the social ecology of the region. Early research by the Chicago School of Sociology concluded that social disorganization on the basis of social ecology is a dominant factor for social problems. The social ecological pattern present at Horizon contributes to the disorganization of the community, which impacts the people's likelihood to get involved in conflict and violence, become alcoholic, suffer mental health problems, and seek escape from life problems (Park, 1952).

For example, the nearby town has many liquor stores and drinking facilities like bars that make it easy for citizens to purchase alcohol at all times of day and night and indulge in alcohol regardless of the risk or the condition of the mind and body. However convenient the vendors are for townsfolk, people living in Horizon need to travel several

miles for the same opportunity. They rely on motor vehicles to get them to town; something considered to be common for First Nations people. Although members of the First Nations community may disapprove of anyone driving to the liquor store in a drunken state and identify it as troublesome, still it is seen as a typical realistic action. It is part of the normal side of life practiced by people:

> *We have a bad issue with drinking and driving and nobody really wants to admit it. But me too, I don't want to admit it because who wants to be classified as an alcoholic that drinks and drives all time, you know, and I know that and back home it's an on going process, it's there everyday, you have a liquor store just there and it's too convenient for us, it's too, you know, it's like saying, well you can get, you can get a beer just like that and nobody can say anything just go drink and drive and like you know, nobody wants to admit it's a problem but it is. In my case I just can't do it right now but I know I am where I am right now and that's good enough for me, thanks.*

Here is the paradox. Horizon is a dry community. But alcohol consumption goes on. To get the liquor, First Nations people must drive a distance to the nearby town, where there are numerous outlets that market to the Horizon people's needs and wants. The creation of a dry community is intended to reduce the risk of alcoholism and affiliated social problems in Horizon, when in fact there is an increased risk of dying by driving late at night, often in an intoxicated state, to buy the liquor.

There is a sense of bravado about drinking and driving, an implicit permissiveness, regardless of a profound frustration some older First Nations people have about its moral and legal issues. As a young man said, "*nobody has the right to tell me to comprehend what I can do and what I can't do because I paid for my vehicle and nobody else did. Nobody helped me out, helped me to get where I am today."*

The idea of driving to the bar to drink represents a community standard for some Horizon residents. The Sharing Circle participants' liberal use of "*everyone*" became an

obvious descriptor that denoted a vision of people routinely driving to the bars in Town X to drink alcohol. A young man explained:

> *Everybody was doing it then, so I felt like sitting at home I know there was times, you know, I'd never do anything until then when I did eight// I turned 18 it was a big, a big eye opener for me because I never saw the bars, I never saw anything like that before and when I went to the bars for the first time it really surprised me. My friends were there, my older cousins were there, my family was there and like what's the deal of going to the bars.*

The community embraces the person. Individual people contribute to and act in response to the community standard. The standard for Horizon can be described as normalized pain. It takes on special significance when First Nations people contemplate who the next person is destined to die prematurely:

> *…At least once a month you were hearing about young people killing themselves, who, who like they were friends of friends, I don't|, I'm trying to talk around the rocks here. Um, but (2) and it's, and sometimes it's just like 'Oh, ok, whatever, another person gone. When's the next one going to happen ' and they're just waiting constantly, they're just waiting for the next one to happen. Um, a lot of young people don't have people to turn to because they're parents ain't around well, or they're not stable. They never had a good life experience; they never had a good environment.*

Violence and death of young people appeared to be common themes in Horizon, creating a bleak picture that shows an ongoing line of victims who died violent deaths both at their own and other people's hands. One of the Sharing Circle participants presented an example of the community's quiet, yet profound suffering. The local school established a wall where pictures were hung in memoriam to teens that died. Unfortunately the practice had to stop because there were too many pictures and too little space. The wall's dismantlement was a sad metaphor, a visual testament to the large number of young people deaths that occur in Horizon. The participant said it this way:

It was hard cause as a teenager in Horizon school, grade 10, grade nine, it was like every couple of months there would be a new picture going on the wall because somebody killed themselves. (3) It was hard and it's not like there's a whole bunch of support for the students to go and talk cause at the time I felt that the counselors there were not supportive at all cause why were these kids killing themselves every, every next party so. And it felt real depressing too when there would be an accident or somebody would pass away, and then they would like put it on the wall for everybody to see and it just got so cluttered, that wall, like you know, it started with one and it was like the whole wall was full so they had to stop putting up the pictures because there was so many.

Drinking and driving, suicide, and acts of personal violence created a great deal of suffering. Much of it was deemed to stem from the lack of emotional support for young people's search for answers, which often led to self-destruction and emotional turmoil. Although this situation was prevalent throughout the community, it was furthermore talked about in conjunction with the school. Without proper school support, students themselves have to work through the psychological impact of experiencing school friends who died needlessly. It becomes a vicious circle. The witness to a tragedy becomes affected and could easily be the next victim or victimizer.

For one young man, drinking alcohol helps him and his friends escape a reality of people suffering in silence, unwilling to talk about the pressures they are facing. The youth in the community have incredible pressures, which are not properly addressed. There is no one to talk to – some parents do listen but many don't. They prefer to play Bingo before they spend time with their children. The young have no one to speak with. There was a general feeling amongst Sharing Circle participants that the community has no program or intervention to help young people. Alcohol becomes an outlet for emotions. The young man's lengthy account merits special attention:

And a lot of the times I don't know what's bullshit you know like, a lot of people are just drinking to escape from reality. And in my case I do because I got a lot of pressure that I deal with and nobody really wants to tell anybody their issues because we're a, we're that kind of a people, we don't want to talk about anything. And back home you know, we tell each other well, we sit down cause um, we were talking and we're respectful towards each other and do that all the time. What happens is we sit down with each and you know, we'll have a drink and we'll talk with each other and we'll explain what happened ?? A lot of times it gets too emotional and too hurtful where they don't want to talk anymore. But a, and we respect each other for that because they are my friends, they are my cousins, my family and you know…I always tell them to be thankful for who they are and what they are because I respect them with all my heart and a, with this group here too it, I'll say that to them, um, it takes a bigger man to and a better man to do something and you know, it's really hard for to get things off people's chest or ?? ?? and a, I know a lot of friends who thinks a lot of us can take the pressure's there of every youth of everyday and I know that, I see that and most First Nations communities don't, don't have that. They tend to forget about us, as growing up as kids. Why because there's no programs, no money. And the thing about that is a, who do you go around to? Who do you go to ask to help you out when you're young. And a lot of times you end up drinking or doing drugs and you know, the thing about that is, well you're parents are there but you can only tell them so much that they don't want to hear the whole truth about what happened and it's true. Some parents are willing to go that extra mile and you know, help them get out of that situation. There are a lot parents that just don't care. Like are willing to go to bingo and forget their kids or just leave them there. Whereas, your friends, they're willing to take them. I see them everyday. I, you know, I drink with them everyday, I smoke with them everyday at least they're there for me whereas my parents would say, well they're not there for me. I mean who's going to help. My community's ain't gonna help me.

There is no help! There is little support from others! Participants learned to cope with this by not speaking about it. It became a silent background, a seen-but-unnoticed curtain against which they behaved as "normal". But that normalcy was some form of deviant or destructive behavior. A woman spoke about the subject:

…That was real traumatizing for me so I learned not to speak about, I learned not to talk about it, I just learned to just shut down like I didn't know how to talk about my feelings or (2) and a lot of us like, because we can't talk or anything or talk about or express our feelings we turn to

> *some kind of like substances like alcohol, drugs, like gambling, food, sex, like you know like anything to take our mind off what's really bothering us. So I'm learning that and that it has a lot to do with you know our trauma that many of us has experienced.*

Again we wish to remind the reader of the connection between the participants' admitted inability to express their feelings or having nobody to talk with in their families, and the legacy of trauma associated with the residential school experience of their parents and grandparents. The wall of silence that separates parents from children today has it origins in the residential school experience as reflected in this testimony of Dr. Leona Makokis (President, Blue Quills First Nations College), a residential school survivor:

> *The meaning of anything we did in residential school did not represent anything that we brought with us from our reserve communities. Soon we quit talking about our experiences and our families.*
>
> *Instead, I quickly learned that "silence was golden." From that first day, we lost our voices. Lost is probably not the right term, because when you lose something one may assume that you might have misplaced it and you may eventually find it.*
>
> *Our voices were silenced. We spoke when we were spoken to. We never had an opinion, there was never an argument; creativity was discouraged. How has this affected our communities? We still feel voiceless, we still fear disagreement, we still keep our opinions to ourselves, we still fear expressing creative alternatives to our problems, and without intention, we pass this down to our children. Our communication and relationship skills are limited.*

Grounded Reasons for Drinking and Driving Behavior

The Sharing Circle participants spoke on how their relationships with drinking and driving were often marked by severe crashes. They were featured as traumatic events to which they attached heavy personal meaning. The experience happened in

adulthood. It was a severe crash. The driver was drunk. The drunkenness was extreme, as one young woman explained:

> *I didn't know I was so drunk that I blew more than two times the legal limit and I was so drunk that other people we're in the vehicle with me and I was by myself and um, when I wanted them to leave me in there because my drinking was so bad I wanted to die*

The above incident was not isolated. It was part of a web of events made up of family violence, drugs, and attempted suicide. To be more specific, one of the Sharing Circle participants said that she was an alcoholic. She then spoke about how she caused a serious three car crash in which her own car caught fire and exploded. Everyone escaped safely. Before the police guided her to the back of the squad car, the woman found a charred piece of glass and in her own words, she wanted to kill herself or "*cut my neck open*." She "*wanted to die in her car*." The police stopped the attempt and as a precaution the officers took everything from her that could become a weapon.

There was much hurt. Part of that hurt was played out in alcohol abuse and reckless driving while drunk. Her hurt was deep. She was reckless with a death wish:

> *...It was um Stampede time and um, usually I always avoid the cops right but that day I just hopped in the car and I seen the check stops and I drove right for it and the cop was walking to the window and I just floored it and I guess I ran the two stops and there's people walking all over, I could have ran over people and why, how I got through the second um, cause it was, they had a, and there's a turn off where you could go in and there's another place and then another road coming out they blocked it so I drove through the parking lot where people were walking and I hit those vehicles and then um, and then ah, I don't know then all that happened.*

Alcohol had a grip on her. She wanted to get rid of it, recognizing that she had many issues, some of which were sexual abuse, family violence and personal hurt over the loss of a family member. Her discourse speaks of her troubled life:

> *During that time I dealt with a lot of, a lot of issues were going, that happened to me since I was a little child and um, there was a lot of violence in our home. I was, I was sexually abused by a lot of people in my family and um, then there was a lot of deaths and the last death that happened was my cousin and I couldn't get over that.*

Drinking and driving became a part of her reach towards total self-destruction. It was intricately linked with her attempt to kill herself on Valentine's Day when she was partying with friends, purposefully drove out of control, crashed, blanked out, and found herself in the ditch next morning. She had spun out of control. In her own words:

> *And that's how I always dealt with it so, it was just to try to die cause I was always wanting to die, I'm tired of, I'm tired of being sad all the time and never saying no??*

Her depression was deep. She shouldered many of her frightful experiences in silence, which took a further toll on her:

> *And I was crying, I finally told her what was going on and um (4) I told her all things going on, there was a lot of bad stuff going, that happened to me in that little while that nobody knew about and I kept it to myself because I didn't want the people to know what happened to me…*

Despite her psychological fragility, the woman showed strength of community by volunteering to work with local people who needed someone to speak about the horrors of residential school. She embraced those experiences, creating within her an even greater depression:

> *I was working with survivors last year, survivors of residential school and working with them and it brought up a lot of issues for me again that I never dealt with and I was going back into my depression again and um, it was really hard. And that's how I always dealt with it so…*

During this time other events brought her even further down. She was date raped and doctors concluded that her mother was terminally ill:

> *I was date raped by a guy and I found out that he had hepatitis C and I was just like I was so scared and then my Mom thought that she might have cancer and she wasn't taking care of herself and all of the stuff I was dealing with I just couldn't handle it any more so that's why I did that so I finally told my Mom and she's like "Well, me being sick doesn't sound like a reason for you to do stuff like that." And I said "You're my only Mom of course it is."*

At first glance, the woman could be characterized as a drinking driver in need of intervention. But that would be too shallow! The drinking and driving is but one escape she used in response to her life events. Her relationship to drinking and driving is complex. This participant's suicidal behavior is certainly reflective of the unusually high suicide rate characteristic of First Nations' communities. Sexually abused as a child, barely surviving (emotionally speaking) in an alcoholic family environment, suffering grief in silence through innumerable losses, whom could she turn to for comfort? Such a life reality negates simplistic solutions. The woman did try to take control of her life by going to counseling and spending "*time in a detox clinic*." She was engaged in self-healing at the time she was participating in the Sharing Circle.

The loss of a loved one like a mother or father can lead to a change of behavior, the onset of a different mood. Often, the change is greater alcohol consumption and more carefree and perhaps deviant behavior afterwards. Part of the change is drinking and driving. Things turned around for one young man when his father died. He became emotional, beginning to drink heavy and drive:

> *I wasn't until I turned 18 that I started really// a I lost my Dad a little while after I turned 18. Right there, I didn't care I w// I just broke a drink open and drove. Was// what really turned everything around, what really set that off was my Dad. (3) [sigh]*

Some Sharing Circle participants embraced the notion that each driver must take responsibility for him or herself. That means the owner of a vehicle drives that vehicle regardless of circumstances – whether s/he is sober or drunk. People who want a ride must accept the driver's drunken state of mind. For example, one young man discussed his affinity to alcohol. According to him, it is the passenger's obligation to accept the driver's condition and his responsibility to drive:

> *My problem is I like to drink. I never thought about drinking and driving and my problem because I do it all the time and um I feel that nobody's obligated to drive my vehicle because it's my vehicle. I paid for it and nobody has the right to tell me what to do because it's my insurance, it's my vehicle and I feel that um, you ride with me you ride with…*

Another participant spoke about drinking at home to avoid the hassles of other people. It is a place for him to relax. There is no one to drag him down. As he explained in the Sharing Circle:

> *…They* (those people) *can't figure there is only way to drink…but I like to drink and a the thing about it is me, I've never hurt anybody and I don't feel like I want to hurt anybody but the thing about it is, it's just too convenient, it's there. I can step into my vehicle and take anybody where I want to go… And like where I come from, there's a lot of haters and that's just not cool … Well, we tell each other we're family and we stick together but then when we go to (Town X) and talk about those people, those people just drag us down and it's going to make us against our own people… So when we drink, you drink at home because I feel safe when I drink at home because nobody there's to bother me, nobody's there to kick my ass, nobody's there to doing anything but, I've a lot of that before last call but our liquor store closes at 11 and we're always making it just before 11 o'clock… There's the only time I really get to relax with myself because I know I'm an alcoholic and I admit that, but, it's just that, I know that my problem in my mind is that I can do it and I can get away with it.*

The speaker regulates his own behavior in an environment that pushes and pulls him emotionally. He drinks alcohol at home. It is his safe zone.

Implied in many of the life stories are descriptions of family alcoholism and its inherent childhood trauma that spans generations. The experiences reflect the theme of the shame-bound self. For example, one woman said, "*I was sexually abused by a lot of people in my family*"; it comes as no surprise that this participant "*wanted to cut her neck open and die in her car*." And how do we account for this toxic emotion-shame – that literally permeates the participants 'family atmosphere'? Rupert Ross (1996), a former Crown Attorney, offers an explanation:

> Those of us in the criminal justice field are familiar with studies of what happens to one industry towns where the mine or mill closes. When those jobs suddenly vanish, the unemployed are robbed of one source of self esteem: the ability to provide adequately for their families. Alcohol and drug use increase measurably, along with the rate of family violence. If the loss of that one source of self-esteem can have such a significant effect, what must have been the effect on all of Canada's aboriginal people as our institutions attacked every aspect of their lives? Try a short exercise in role reversal, imagining a non-Aboriginal mine worker whose job was taken away by all-powerful outsiders. Imagine that he knew he had no realistic chance of ever qualifying for another one. Imagine that he was unable to go for comfort and help to this own churches and his own psychiatrists and hospitals, because those same outsiders had made them illegal. Imagine that, whenever he went to their version of such helping places, the professionals who staffed them could not speak his language, but demanded that he learn theirs. Imagine, as well, that all those powerful outsiders held him, his language and his culture in such low esteem that they forcibly removed his children, to raise them to be just like them. Imagine, at that point, waking up to silence throughout your entire community, where only the week before there had been the raucous voices of new generations. What reason would there be to even get out of bed? And what happens when you are told, from every direction and in every way, that you and all your people have no value to anyone, no purpose to your lives, no positive impact on the world around you? No one can stand believing those things of themselves. No one can bear considering themselves worthless, essentially invisible. At some point people brought to this position stand up and demand to be noticed, to be recognized as being alive, as having influence and power. And the easiest way to assert power, to prove that you exist, is to demonstrate power over people who are weaker still, primarily by making them do things they don't want to do. The more those things shame and diminish that weaker person, the more the abuser feels, within the twisted logic victimization, that they have been empowered and restored themselves. Further, nothing is more attractive to those who need to feed off the denigration of others

> than the road of sexual abuse, and the safest and easiest sexual abuse is of children. (p. 47-78)

As indicated by Ross, government policies only served to reinforce the sense of worthlessness associated with Indigenous culture and identity. It is this sense of collective worthlessness-shame that planted the seeds of addiction and sexual abuse so prevalent today; hence the inherited generational shame, a self-perpetuating cycle that ensures the transmission of shame to each succeeding generation due to "the commitment of all family members to maintain the secrets through rigid rules about what may or may not be talked about" (Fossum & Mason, 1986, p. 46). And "what may or may not be talked about" are the "sexual abuse, battering, and neglect [that] are common experiences for the child in an alcoholic home". According to Hudak et al, (1999), over 70 percent of incest victims lived in alcoholic homes, and 69 percent of reported cases of battering and neglect were related to alcohol abuse." (Hudak et al, as quoted in Carter & McGoldrick, 1999, p. 464).

A Look to the Future

It appears that some participants who experienced dramatic and intense events hit a kind of wall. They wanted to change their lives. That change for the better included stopping alcohol consumption and impaired driving. Some persons wanted to become role models for their children. For example, some young women in the Sharing Circle did not want their children to experience the drastic events they did. They wanted a better future for their children. To accomplish this, they tried to set themselves as good role models. By doing so, she is establishing a connection to her children that has been missing in previous generations. For example:

> *I try to teach my kids, my older is ten so, I know that I have to um, do my best to set good examples for him. So, that's my relationship.*

One woman did not want her child to find out about her troubled early years. She also does not want to be a bad role model, creating a greater bond with the child. She was prepared to take on new responsibilities, recognizing that she no longer lives only for herself, but for her baby:

> *I'm happy I haven't like um, drank and drove cause I can't, I can't do things like that right now because I have, I have a baby. I want, I don't want him to know that kind of stuff about me. Like I see, I watch people make mistakes and like they totally know they shouldn't do that, it's like they haven't, I don't know, like they can't look at, look at that problem. It's hard for them too. And I know I can't do that because if I do that and then he'll do that. I'm not living just for myself anymore and that's, I don't know, like um, I had to do that myself.*

For some, expecting a child motivated them to change from a life of reckless drinking and driving to one of alcohol abstention. They were scared that the same thing that happened to the mothers will happen to the children:

> *What stopped me was when I found out was going to be a Dad and the fact that the first time I got pulled over I was drinking and it just scared, scared me, what I have to loose.*

The latter accounts illustrate a sense of hope and optimism. Some young men and women, who themselves had come through a life of hardship brought on by living out social problems, decided to change the norm. They took on a greater responsibility for the emotional and social needs of their children by becoming positive role models.

HOW DO YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH DRINKING AND DRIVING CONNECT TO FRIENDS/PEERS?

Horizon people like to do things together. It is a reflection of the collective – First Nations people seeking meaning through friends and family. For many, friends are very important. They can support individuals who have experienced personal trauma like a death in the family. As one participant described:

> *When I lost my brother my family was kind of a mess, they were all doing their own thing. And me I had no one, I had no one there to support me but my friends were there. During the whole ceremony I was with my friends, they stayed with me. I said to my Dad "They were with me." And I think that since we're so close that we're always, we're always going to do the same thing following each other.*

Drinking and driving opportunities with friends seemed to be always at hand's reach. It is common or normal for anyone in the community to get started on alcohol and to be involved with drinking and driving with friends. As one young woman suggested, "*they just, they just were always there and when I was drinking and driving they were with me…"* Opportunities were consistently there, "…*we always did that*…" For some participants, although they were in their early teens, 13-or 14-years-old, their friends were older, "*we would always take off with older people all the time and so, we like were always taking off and the people we would hop in with were always older and were always drunk*." The older friends would or could supply the liquor, becoming convenient sources (illegal) for liquor:

> *…One of my friends became// well once we became friends with this one guy, he was 19 he started buying booze for us because we were under age so we'd go// we'd pay him extra because he'd buy us drinks.*

The Horizon community seems to erase friendship lines based on age. There is more of a friendship blend, a product of strong inter generational connections; a cultural/social phenomenon that helps account for the greater variety of friendships in the community. Great grandfathers, who have lost their culture through the residential schools, have lost the sense of positive role modeling for younger people. They easily take on the role of friends who participate in high-risk actions with younger people than family members who provide wise guidance and leadership.

The expanded friendship circle, inclusive of family and non-family members, can give older friends the opportunity to influence young people to become involved in questionable behaviors such as drinking alcohol, taking drugs, and driving drunk. Older friends and relatives can easily harm young people by encouraging them to partake in high-risk actions like alcohol abuse at parties, drinking and driving, and playing chicken on the road:

> *...that night her (the girl's friend aged 13) and another friend of mine they hopped in with these older people and they were cruising around partying and everything and um, my other friends decided to stay at the dance and they decided not to go with them and um, anyways what happened was they all ended up going back to (Town C) and drinking and driving is really rapid out there and um, just everyone always drinks and drives and um, the, the vehicle that they were in, they met up with this truck and they were playing chicken and what happened was they both turned away at the same time but they turned the same direction, they got into a head on and all of them died except for one.*

The accounts offered by Sharing Circle participants reflect a "living in the telling", emotional accounts of what happened, with interruptions of sobbing, sighing, and silence of sadness. A girl lost her best friend, which completely traumatized her. Her learning of the crash was documented this way:

...there was like cop cars just zooming by and I was just freaking out. My first thought was my Mom and them, you know, like they're just down that way and so I went running next door to my Grandmothers cause our houses were really close together and I ran next door and I started phoning around, like all my friends I knew up that way and the second place I phoned was um, my friend (X) and that was K's sister's, um K's first cousin and I phoned there and I said, "Do you know what's going on? Like cops are just flooring it by here and ambulances and everything." And all of a sudden she just started crying and she said, "K's been in an accident! K's been in an accident!" and I just started crying and she goes, "There was five of them in there and there is somebody in another vehicle but I don't really know what happened.

She was aware something awful happened, but it was not until her mother told her of the event that she became aware that her best friend had died:

...When my Mom got home cause as soon as she knew it was K, she come running home, she come racing home and as soon as she pulled up I went out and I just dropped and she just come and grabbed me and she's, "I can't believe you know already. I can't believe you know already." And she was just crying and then she was feeling so bad because she was remembering that she said that to K and she's felt so bad too. And then um, the last thing I remember was they took me, they took me into my Grandmother's house and I was sitting there and then I finally calmed down and I said, "I 'm going to go home, I need to be by myself." And I got in between our houses and I just dropped to the ground and that's the last thing I remember and then um, I guess my Mom came out and she took me in and I could hear her talking but it was just she was really, really far away and (2) and then um, I was sitting there and a they kept rubbing my hand and stuff and I was just like, I don't know, and I could hear her asking me if I wanted a cigarette or something and I, I was just saying no.

Of interest is the concept of "friends and relatives." When alcohol consumption happens and drinking driving follows, friends participate. And there always appeared to be plenty of friends taking part in the action. However, when one of the Sharing Circle participants decided to change her life and stop drinking, her friendship circle narrowed considerably. Friends left her:

> *Friends played a really big part in all of my impaired experiences I don't know, from the time of my accident until now um, I had so many friends I couldn't even count them and now I can't even barely count five. Because when I quit drinking they steer clear of me. And I was always alone and I had to face all my things on my own, and that's how I started drinking again because I got tired of being alone. And I don't know, it's just (2) it's just crazy that, the things that still happen like with my friends and stuff now like because I chose not to drink any more, that it's like that again.*

The woman philosophized about how friends act differently when they are drunk and when they are sober. She has to keep an eye on the change and how that change affects her belief in friendship. It may be synonymous with the general concept of friends and drinking buddies. They are not necessarily the same. The former has greater depth of affection than does the latter. The young woman is still sorting it out. Someone who is committed to a friend for life may change that commitment when alcohol enters the picture:

> *I just think that a, when you have a friend it's supposed to be for life you know, and it's like, it's like your own family member. You take them as your own and the thing about it is when you're drinking, everybody knows that, everybody's a bull-shitter because they talk lots, they try to upgrade themselves to be a better person.*

Continuation of Personal Crisis: Friends Died

Participants experienced incredible hardship with the deaths of family members. That hardship can be extended to friends. As with family, friends dying or seriously injured in drinking and driving crashes was altogether too common. The data showed a further interesting trend. Crash events that included drinking and driving were routine and common. They were usually mentioned, but seldom did they receive further discussion. Only traumatic crashes were considered important enough to share with others. Typically friends partied! Friends crashed! Friends died or became paralyzed:

So it was always my friends and stuff just wanting to be cool and wanting to fit in. (2) And it led us into all the situations and we were into a few accidents and stuff but we made it through and another friend of mine had died in a car accident, it was my friends older sister, but I was pretty close to her too. (2) So I know, I know people who have died because of accidents. And my brother's cousin is paralyzed because of an impaired accident and, and it was because him too, it was because of friends.

Changing Times, Changing Friends

Approximately 65% of the community is under 25-years-old. This high youth population reflects a high sense of risk taking that is characteristic of young people in general. But, for some young people living in Horizon, their traumatic experiences have changed them towards greater caution and more responsibility. For others, maturity and personal development and a changing life stream have motivated a change in behavior. They no longer yearn for the alcohol and engage in drinking and driving, whether as driver or as willing passenger. They have decided to no longer be cool as defined by local folkways. As a result, they no longer have as many friends. For most, the trade off is worth it:

That's why I decided to come and talk here because I think it's important that we talk and if friends are going to say you know, that you have to do this or whatever, or if you're not cool, well, I guess they're not friends. That's why I don't have very many of them [laugh] but its ok.

I have no friends, maybe because I'm older and they're still doing what they do, is drinking…

Some young people have escaped from the peer pressure of "going along" and the "community feel" that drinking and driving, although considered to be high-risk, is passively permitted. Others are outgrowing their former friends who still abuse alcohol and/or other drugs like crack cocaine. They are pursuing an education. They have

established different priorities. Their pursuit of new goals does not mean that they don't want friends, rather because of the change, their friends take less account of them. Former friends now organize their lives outside of the person who decided to change her lifestyle. The loss of close friends has an emotional price. One woman described her experience in detail:

> *A lot of my friends are still drinking. (2) A couple of them have turned to a real bad drug. Like crack cocaine and they still drink too. The good thing about my friends that, like the ones that have turned to crack, they never try to like force that upon me. I respect them for that. Um (3) um (5) Well, my friends that are still drinking I'm, I'm starting to question my friendships with them because I'm trying to make these changes in my life and I feel that I have been changing. Since I started at Blue Quills and like since started the social work program and I just feel that (9) [Sobbing] I just feel that I don't have any friends any more cause they don't even like come over or they don't even phone and then the only time they want me to see them is to go out and (3) that's why I'm just starting to question my friendships and, and then once my friends go and then they come back like, then they phone on Sundays or Mondays or Tuesdays and they like, "Oh, we had so much fun." and "You should have been there but we know you're not allowed to come out." And it's not about me not being allowed, it's just I make those choices not to and it's like they make me feel real guilty. I do want to but I don't trust myself because I know when I drink I know I'm going to hurt Larry and myself and my kids. (10) So ya, I'm angry with my friends. I'm angry because they don't understand that I'm trying to change it. (10) [sobbing]*

The change in lifestyle is a powerful break with the past and a determined change for the future. The past was painful, with violence playing a major role. The change is heroic. Yet friends do not see it this way. They continue their lives without the person intent on changing her life. And it hurts, as explained by the following speaker:

> *I spent all my teenage years being shacked up to an abusive man, so I don't know how it feels to go and party like as a teenager, cause I was like, so controlled and [sigh] and the times when he did leave to (Outside province), like to go visit with his family um, those were the only times I, I would like leave. I would go and party with my friends. Um (6) and yea,*

um… but they, my friends that I hung out with then, they're still my friends but they still drink today. Um, they're still my friends or like I still love them and care for them but I …can't like put all my energy into them, trying to change them because they have that choice to quit or not to quit and I'm just here for them, like to listen to them, you know, to be that shoulder for them to cry on. But I'm not putting my energy any more into like trying to help them, like cause I'm trying to help myself. Um, what I notice is that, since I've been trying to make these changes for myself, like (2) they're not around any more [Sobbing] they can't even like phone me and ask me how I'm doing and that hurts.

Packed Vehicles

As was mentioned previously, friends within and outside of the immediate and extended family like to do things together. This includes getting into a vehicle and driving towards a destination, which often is a liquor store, party, or other drinking event. The large number of people in the vehicle, although sociable, can also be high-risk. Too often drinking and driving crashes included vehicles that were packed with young passengers. Two sample comments are:

…It was a long, long month of putting up with drunks and hangovers and one evening we decided 'well let's to go out to the country' and it was like the very first snow of the season and we were driving and everybody was rowdy in the vehicle and I was driving and I wasn't drinking but (2) there was so many people in the vehicle and we were in a little tiny truck and there must have been at least twelve of us in there, there was four of us in the back, and I don't know how many…There was nobody in the back of the cab, thank God. My brother was there, a couple of brothers and a couple of sisters and everybody knew everybody. We got onto the country road and we rolled, we rolled pretty far back. But just before we rolled, I, like I was driving, I was first time drivers, I had a learners! I never drove a truck before. Just the way we rolled and the way things happened like, the person beside me was drunk. It was his vehicle and he was telling me, "Go faster, go faster. We're not going to make it." We were coming around a curve and we hit the curve too fast and I couldn't handle it and we flipped. And we flipped and flipped and flipped. Not only once um, everybody got out of the truck, the truck got towed. Everybody was just furious. They were mad at me. I didn't know how to handle it so I left. Everybody was yelling at me. There was like, we were standing in the

middle of the road, 12 young people, my brother was the oldest and he kept telling me, "Let me drive, let me drive." I should have listened to him.

…I lost her in 1996 she rolled in her um, well she wasn't driving she was sitting in the passengers side and there was six of them in that vehicle. And they got hit from behind and she flew out of the side window and the vehicle fell over her.

Having so many passengers in a vehicle distracts the drivers, regardless of whether they are drunk or sober and whether the driver was at fault or not. As the second speaker outlined, her friend was a passenger in a full vehicle that was hit from behind. It was not noted as being caused by her driver. But the driver was not wearing her seat belt and she paid with her life. Drinking and driving, with vehicles full of passengers and no seat belt use is a combination that makes for higher risk of death and serious injury.

A point of clarification needs to be made. According to the Sharing Circle participants, friends are not just close acquaintances. They can also be cousins, nephews and nieces from blended families. Their lifestyles are often closely interwoven at family/friendship levels. Hence the influence they have on each other can be dramatic. For example, a young man suggested that his cousins or friends with whom he used to drink and drive no longer live in town. They have either moved or they are in jail:

Most of my impaired experiences I was with my friends and they're um similar to just like me but. Well, all the friends I grew up with like all my cousins the don't live in Horizon anymore, they're like all in jail or having families outside of Horizon and stuff like that.

The summary of the lengthy talk about friends and drinking and driving could best be illustrated with a quote. Friends have a bad influence on young people's behavior, especially when it comes to drinking and driving. As the young man said, "*Friends have a bad influence on things that you do*."

HOW DO YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH DRINKING AND DRIVING CONNECT TO FAMILY?

Akin to the concept of holism, where drinking and driving is envisioned to be part of a total life spectrum, family members play a significant role in the young person's drinking and driving activities. Listening to the many accounts offered by Sharing Circle participants, parents and siblings were often involved in alcohol consumption and drinking and driving:

> *…Well a lot of my family did it* (drinking and driving) *and my little sister was getting really bad into drinking… I used to party with her and her friends a lot, and I was trying to make her stop and then it got to the point where we quit talking and we were always like this [pause]. And the past year we haven't really talked and um, she went through a lot of life changes, she, she became a lesbian and she was doing a lot of drinking and um, her drinking got so bad that um I would stay up at night waiting for her to come home. I got so scared that I would get knocks at the door in the middle of the night thinking it was cops or whatever, because I knew what could happen. And I guess she got an impaired, just like last month. She lost her license and she's not even remorseful over it or anything because my Dad just took out her car and still let her use it even though she doesn't have a license and I guess she just, she just kept partying after that.*

The problematic behaviors seem to keep going, with parents often actively or passively contributing to the continuation of the behavior. A suitable motto may be, "Let things be and it will resolve itself." As the woman above expressed, although her sister had her driver license revoked for impaired driving, still her father allowed her to continue driving the car. So she kept partying and driving. As indicated in the early section of this study ("How Do Your Experiences with Drinking and Driving connect To Friendships") friends are powerful predictors of alcohol use/abuse and the risks associated with the abuse (accidents, etc). As one participant admitted:

> *I think my friends have a lot to do with my behavior because when I was a teenager they were like Mom and Dad I guess, you know you could be anything. I would, to get acceptance just to be liked.*

Quite obviously drinking buddies are a surrogate family. The role of parents as playing an important preventive role in the use/abuse of alcohol is nullified due to their psychological absence:

> *There are a lot of parents that just don't care. Like are willing to go to bingo and forget their kids or just leave them there, whereas, their friends, they're willing to take them. I see them everyday. You know, I drink with them everyday. I smoke with them everyday. At least they're there for me whereas my parents would say, well they're not there for me.*

Even more disturbing, however, is the juvenile behavior of parents and grandparents. Earlier in the study, a participant talked about how as a sixteen-year-old teenager, she was used unwittingly as a get-away driver in a robbery involving her father and two of his accomplices. Another participant shares his experience when he received his driver's license at 18:

> *I did a lot of sober driving for my Grandfather and I think the rules around that is when you're going to sober drive, you have to stay sober and if you really want to drink then make plans for it later. So when I would sober drive for my Grandfather, like cause I like to drink still and, so when I would drive for him he would always make sure he would buy liquor for me so that when we get back we could/cause everybody always liked partying at his house so I would go and get drunk there and we would all stay there.*

At eighteen, this participant was rewarded for his "responsible behavior" (sober driving for Grandfather) by being allowed to party with his Grandfather. Instead of the grandparent assuming a grand parenting role (e.g. Elder of the family), this grandparent crosses over a generational boundary-literally stepping down 2 generations– to be his grandson's "drinking buddy."

This dissolution of boundaries separating one generation from the next, as well as the role confusion associated with each generation is a typical characteristic of traumatized families living in poverty. The question becomes, "how do we account for the phenomenon of grandparents, parents, and their teenage children/grandchildren behaving as 'drinking buddies'"?

Underclass families constitute the majority of most First Nations communities. Many of these families experience chronic unemployment while some engage in illegal activity to boost their standard of living. Many of these participants come from these underclass family backgrounds with compressed intervals between generations. A common characteristic of extended underclass family systems with "condensed, overlapping inter-generational structure" (Burton, 1996 a, 1996 b, as quoted by Hines in Carter & McGoldrick, 1999, p.329) is that "individuals have children and become grandparents at far earlier ages." Hence the adolescent mother by giving birth, is launched into young adult status (parenthood), and her young adult mother becomes a grandmother, often being forced to assume the responsibilities of surrogate parent (I bid; p. 329). Elaborating on the impact of condensed generational structures on the life cycle of Afro American families living in poverty, Burton portrays a disturbing picture, "Compressed intervals create role ambiguity and confusion for family members who must take on the responsibility before they are ready. Teens and their children vie for the attention of grandmothers (whose more privileged age mates may be just starting families). Pubescent girls and their mother may date young men of the same age. Grandfathers, fathers, and sons compete for grossly underpaid jobs or for drug-dealing territory" (as quoted by Kliman & Madsen in Carter & McGoldrick, 1999, p.94).

This is the context of drinking and driving in the community, and for that matter, many First Nations communities: a potent toxic mixture of poverty, high unemployment and blurred intergenerational boundaries that bind the teenage (parents') generation (13 plus), the young adult (grand parents') generation (26 plus), the great grandparents' generation (40 plus), and the great great-grandparents' generation (55 plus) as a group of "drinking buddies" along side friends, uncles, aunties, and cousins, etc.

A logical follow-up question is, "how can the implosion of the traditional indigenous family structure be explained?" One line of reasoning concentrates on the use of alcohol – a social lubricant which literally dissolves the psychological boundaries that help individuals retain heir autonomy and help differentiate one generation from the next. It is used as a form of self-medication to cope with generations of accumulated trauma and grief. It has had a devastating impact on traditional indigenous family structures that valued kinship, sharing, and respected treatment of all living things. However, European contact – the equivalent of an emotionally destructive Tsunami – and the trauma that awaited each generation's arrival, ensured the transformation of traditional indigenous child-focused family systems into family systems organized around alcohol. As Hudak et al. point out:

> The presence of addiction in a family - in whatever generation - complicates differentiation for all family members. Family boundaries are often too rigid or too diffuse; roles are frequently reversed or otherwise inappropriate, and triangles are activated and shift, depending on whether the alcoholic is drinking. (as quoted in Carter & McGoldrick, 1999, p. 459)

The turmoil imposed on Indigenous families through European contact is most visible to mainstream Canadians in the stereotypical image of the "drunken Indian." His untold story – a story of unresolved grief that spans generations, a story of coping with

grief through addictions, a story of shame accumulated over generations – is a story that remains largely invisible. It includes the loss of land, culture, and spirituality. It reflects experiences with residential school, high poverty rate, role models drinking with parents/grandparents – replicating their actions.

DESIGNATED DRIVERS

The designated driver, or as some Sharing Circle participants referred to as the "*sober driver*," was commonly discussed as a safe and positive feature. However, when the concept was personalized, the designated driver was difficult to implement in Horizon's present state. Some young people do not use designated drivers because nobody wants to take the initiative. One of the reasons for the lack of volunteers is that they do not have a driver's license or their vehicles are not insured. And it seems that often participants try to stay sober but because of substantial social pressure, they have one or more drinks. A self-documented state of affairs was presented by one of the Sharing Circle participants:

> *Nobody wants to take that initiative to have a designated driver in our class. Everybody just wants to drink. It would be good if I could have one like that all time but nobody has drivers nobody has, you know, credentials and that sucks… And a lot of then don't even have insurance and that's what makes it harder. I don't know what to say. I wish, you know, in my case I do it and I don't know what to say because ah (2) I was lost always, I don't have a DD so, I want to be one, but I don't know, I just can't leave it and it's too hard. And when I do it, when I think about going out and not having a drink, it ends up by the end of the night I do have a drink eventually any how so, I'm lying to myself if I want to become a DD anyhow and I don't want to do that because I don't like lying. I don't have it and it's just too bad for me.*

Despite the pressures, most of the Sharing Circle participants indicated that they have been designated drivers at one point or another. But most did drink – some minimally, others more. They created risk situations for their passengers and themselves. According to a Sharing Circle discussant, those who intend to be sober drivers, but turn to drinking sometimes rationalize their actions by telling their friends that "*they drive better when they are drunk* …" One woman told the group that when she sober drives she drinks alcohol. She suggested that her actions were safe because she had never been in a serious crash. She only had a "*fender bender*" while under the influence of alcohol.

Others have taken the responsibility to be a designated driver, recognizing that the role is a major responsibility. One woman likes to drive into town to enjoy the violence in the bar. She called them the "*three o'clock fights*." She knew that people would need a ride afterwards, and she was there to provide that service. As she said:

> *I think that it would be a bigger burden on myself if, if I let them drive their own vehicle and they're drunk and then they go and kill themselves and then it would be something that I don't think I could live with. So yea, I would prefer to be the designated driver. And there were times too when I would tell my husband "I'm going to go into town, I'm going to go watch the three o'clock fights." Cause at, the bars close and then there's fights start to break out at three o'clock. So I 'd go into town and there was people I knew that needed a ride and they'd say "Oh, yea, "X" is here," and "Ok, we have a ride home." So it wasn't just to go watch the fights but just to make sure that people got home safe and that's what I don't know, that was my reason for the three o'clock fights. But then I really enjoyed the three o'clock fights. So, it works out.*

The woman's description is consistent with the conceptual dominion of the report, namely that violence and drinking and driving are interrelated on so many different levels.

Experience carries a great deal of explanatory power for the Sharing Circle participants. Their view of designated drivers occurred in terms of past experiences, which were dominantly negative and critical. One of the critical features was the age at which a participant first became a designated driver. One woman was eleven-years-old. Her mother had been drinking with her boyfriend. The young girl was too scared to drive a long distance with the drunken man. She asked her mother if she could drive the vehicle instead. She noted:

> *...We got to (Town X), or well half way to (Town X) I, I started smelling the alcohol cause she just cracked open a beer and her boyfriend was driving and I was like 'Oh no and he's drinking and driving and I'm in here and I'm really young and I want to live' and I got really scared and I was like "Where are we going?" and she said, "We're going to go to (Town P)." And I was like 'holy cow!' I was like um, "Mom can I drive?" and I was like "I don't like this man driving and cause he's drunk" and I think I could do it, and I know I could do it." Cause I always wanted to drive and she was like "Oh, no way." And she was like "You're only eleven." And I was like "Mom, I don't want to die." And a (2) she like, "Ok, we'll drive out of town and you can drive when we go to the back road." and I don't know what that road is called, but that back road from Town X to Elk Point and there's buffalos like a, like there's a buffalo farm or whatever but back roads anyways and um, we, we took that road and I got like behind the wheel and my first time ever driving and, but I, I did good. We got to Elk Point and they went to liquor store there, I don't know why they couldn't stop in town and to the liquor store there, but I don't know, they picked up alcohol and all that and then her boyfriend tried to drive again and I told him, "No, no, no! If you're going to drive, I'm going to stay here and I'll phone my grandparents" or whatever or, I was like "I'm not going to like let you drive." or he was like "Ok then, you can drive." And so I drove from (Town P) to (Town Y) and passed a few cops and but, they,*

Again, akin to earlier descriptions about the number of drunken passengers often found in a vehicle was an illuminating account from a young woman who described how she, as a young girl, managed to operate a vehicle loaded with drunken passengers. She tried to maintain control, but she crashed. Her account of the event was as follows:

So he gave me the keys and so we all got into the vehicle and there was like real lots of us in that car, it was a small little car and, and we were driving and he was sitting next to me and he was like smoking a cigarette and he was like, going to like ash the cigarette in the ash tray and then his cigarette dropped to the floor and like he leaned over and um, when he was learning over he was going to put his hand like this and then to reached his cigarette then he put his hand on the wheel instead of the, the dashboard and then that's where I lost control of the wheel and we were like doing fish tails and we hit the ditch and we hit a fence and I just jumped out and I just started freaking out like I just started shaking and crying and I was like "I'm sorry!" and um, everyone was just like freaking out like "Holy shit!" Like "Holy shit!" And I everyone was just saying it to me and like I freaked out and (2) and then I told him you know like "I want to go home. I want to drive this car back to the town site."

Serving as a designated driver can create its own violence, an ever present possibility whenever someone volunteers for the role. One obvious risk is a crash. A member of the Sharing Circle stopped being a "sober drive" after her husband suggested that she needs to become more aware of her child, and to take less chances of becoming involved in a serious mishap. So she quit designated driving:

But now it's different, I have kids, like I have a family and when people phone me and ask me to drive for them, you know like it's like they put me on the spot because like my husband like he tells me "When you go out and drive for other people, I worry about you because what if there's other drinking like people that are drinking and driving and what if they hit you guys?" and he's like "I, I could never…" like "I would never be able to forgive myself" and he's like "I don't…" and he told me, "I don't want you drinking" I mean "I don't want you sober driving." And he made me think about it like so now like my friends don't ask me to sober drive for them they'll go and ask other people or else one of them will stay sober for the night, they'll, they'll be the sober driver. But, and ya, so I don't want to put my life at risk for anybody else like I know that might sound mean or anything but I have kids. I want to see my kids grow up, I want to be there for my kids. Nobody's going to be there for my kids but me, so you know I make that choice. I'd rather stay athome for with my kids because my kids are, are my loves of my lives, and I mean the loves of my life and (2) I don't know.

Regardless of potential pitfalls, sober driving is practiced by some participants more so on an as-needs basis than regular routine. Some participants, for whom alcohol consumption is a big part of their lifestyle, are prepared to forego the temptation of liquor in order to "sober drive" friends who need it. That usually means a carload of people needing help. By volunteering to do so, the participants believed that they help protect their friends' lives. For one young woman, the payoff comes after the drive when she can drink herself. She will control her alcohol consumption for the sake of the cause, but once she has fulfilled her obligations she looks forward to indulging herself. Her passengers appreciate her dedication, often making liquor available to her after the drive.

There is a sense that designated driving is akin a "necessary evil" in light of a reality where large amounts of alcohol are consumed, long distances between places are traveled, impaired people potentially engaging in deviant behavior, and the large number of friends/family consume alcohol. But it can be accomplished, more so on the basis of meaning shared amongst friends and family than as a pre-planned strategy for safety. Friends are in need, and some participants offer themselves. It is part of friendship or sociality, the maintenance of which appears to be very important to the Horizon First Nations people.

An appropriate conclusion to the section on designated driver is realized from one of the participants when she said, "*Being with people who are drinking is never safe no matter if you're driving or just in the same room*." But sober driving for drinking friends is an expression of sharing amongst a group of people.

SHARING CIRCLE PARTICIPANTS' RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

A good place to start the discussion on participants' recommendations for drinking and driving interventions is represented in the following quote, "*Our communities are lost and we got to start with our communities first…It takes a community to build a community so first we got to look at the problem."* Drinking and driving issues are holistic, enmeshed in other features of life – cultural, social, community, historical, ecological, economic, educational, and legal.

The recommendations that were offered ran the gambit of cultural and social embeddedness to practical expediency. On the embedded side is the notion that people require emotional help when needed. Emotional well being leads to reduced alcohol abuse and drinking and driving. One of the young women suggested that all the abuses experienced in the community create alcohol-related troubles:

> *If you focus on the mental well-being of your people and meet those needs like you know, talk about what's the problems that cause people to drink like talk about the sexual abuse, bring it out, talk about the, the violence in the homes, about the physical abuse, the emotional abuse. If we don't deal with those things there's no way we're going to fix the drinking and driving and I strongly believe that.*

Young people need more opportunities to talk about their experiences, to speak before others, and express their feelings. They need to rid themselves of their fears and frustrations. And the community should provide those opportunities, to help young people overcome their sadness, shyness, and guilt. The young people should live life, rather than cope day by day. Help needs to be directed in this way.

Closely aligned to this theme is the suggestion that people should be encouraged to speak together, to help one another, to get in closer touch with their culture – activities

like the Sharing Circle. The residential school experiences and colonization has left First Nations people disconnected, isolated from each other. Efforts need to be made for people to re-connect, to stand together, support each other – family, friends and neighbors. As one young woman described:

> *Like um, teaching the children more cultured aspects because the colonized practices have taught us to, kind of like stand alone and do it for yourself instead of thinking about, you know, your family or close people because in the cultural ways it's like you know you stand together, even though you do something you know you'll have support and stuff like that and instead of being alone.*

One way of addressing the people's emotional needs is to organize peer groups – at the high school and perhaps post high school level. They would stand together with students in emotional turmoil. Volunteers would be chosen, trained and placed into the community. These individuals should be selected by students. They will be highly trusted members of the community, who will be taught to listen to students' problems, experiences, fears, depressions, etc. The woman, who had previous experience being a support group helper, defined the process:

> *…In high school I know that um, peer support groups would help. A whole bunch of us would be like picked and then we would get trained for a natural helpers training and that was awesome. Like I was one of them, I was one of them that was responsible enough to| we were supposed to write down there people that we trusted the most in the whole scho//, in the whole school. And if you're name was shown up repetitively like then you were picked to go on this natural training, natural helpers training program. And it was awesome. Like you, you were taught to sit there and listen to your friends and stuff like that and deal with properly instead of sitting back and listening to it because sometimes you know if they're going to harm themselves or others then things should be done at that point, um, and ya, peer support groups, that's how I think, for high school and junior high.*

Peer group support or some other form of emotional support in the community would compensate for the many young people whose parents fail to build up their self-esteem by saying, "*Good for you. Way to go*." By providing opportunities for young people to talk, they are in a position to be influenced about the dangers of drinking and driving. Drinking and driving becomes part of an emotional supportive interaction. Another female participant offered her comments:

> *...Like when we can go talk to some// to a counselor how we can get some things set up where any of us can go talk to, talk to people in the schools and get them excited about it and let them know what they, what they're going to lose if they um, they choose to drink and drive a, like their friends and other drink and drive, letting them know it affects everybody and get them, um like give them more information as I explained. Like show the statistics around the area, what age groups it's happens to, help them with peer pressure and letting them know they can, they have to make their own choice. And sometimes, like a lot of times, they don't even have their own family to support their decisions they have to make the right choices by themselves, like nobody's there to say like "Good for you. Way to go." or whatever.*

The process will let young people know how others feel about them, that others care about them, and that they should not be acting irresponsible. By caring for others, there is a care for community:

> *By doing, like letting people know how you feel, that you care about them that they shouldn't be being irresponsible, it shows that you care um, care for them, care for the community.*

Greater education in the schools! That was the hallmark of some suggestions for improving the local drinking and driving problem. It should be taught consistently over a period of time, not piecemeal, from the elementary grades to high school graduation:

> *I think that's what they should do is like take it in school when they're young, and you just keep doing it until they graduate. I don't know, I don't have that much to say.*

An extension of greater education in the schools is greater education in the community through organized clubs like the Boys and Girls Club, and public workshops that demonstrate the dangers of drinking and driving. People need to know the downside of drinking and driving, in a way that it makes an impact in their lives.

At the other end of the intervention spectrum is the practical – doing something to help the situation in a tangible, direct, and observable way. A popular intervention is to implement a designated driver program – a local initiative that takes the best of designated driving and "Operation Red Nose" in the summer or other times of the year. For example:

> *There's Operation Red Nose…at least once, every once in a while in the community, it was really helpful a lot. Someone was saying sometime during summers ?? often have a party or Christmas holidays, any time…*

The final point of interest is ecological. The issue that requires some form of intervention is the abundance of liquor stores found in the Town X area. It now stands at nine, plus four bars that encourage off-sales. The argument is that the abundance of such outlets creates customer demand from people, who may otherwise not be tempted to buy as much. It adds extra temptation. The First Nations people must drive late at night to buy liquor. The desire to buy the liquor comes during the late hours of the night, at time when they are likely to already have consumed alcohol. According to one participant, that was not the case before liquor outlets were privatized. He would like to see a change, to reduce the number of liquor outlets which will reduce the temptation to drink late at night, which will lessen the driving.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

The following results arising directly from the Sharing Circle merit mention:

There is an intimate link between drinking and driving and the everyday lives of individuals. All of the participants experienced life-altering events, namely family members' deaths and trauma caused by (directly or indirectly) drinking and driving. The trauma occurred at different times in participants' lives.

Drinking and driving accounts almost routinely included interaction between police and Sharing Circle participants, friends, and family, whether that is on a take-down, routine stop, drinking and driving charge, or post-crash investigation.

There is an implicit standard in the Horizon community that drinking and driving, although high-risk and traumatic, is a normal part of life and it is passively permitted by "many" members of the community as defined by the Sharing Circle participants' common use of "everyone".

Horizon young people are in a never-ending circle of unresolved personal conflict which may lead to violence. They witness tragedies that produce victims, observe high-risk behaviors, and become potential victims and/or victimizers. There is limited or no support for young people who are experiencing emotional deep-rooted psychological turmoil about their histories, families or friends. Violence, alcoholism, suicide, drug abuse, and drinking and driving deaths often result.

Friends play a major role in the lives of Horizon young people. The younger boys and girls congregate with friends who are older, providing greater opportunities for exploring and engaging in deviant acts. Furthermore, much of the drinking and driving happens with friends, who often are also cousins, nephews, nieces or other family members.

Drinking and driving has become another expression of personal trauma, a major feature of personal destruction, that includes other social problems like sexual abuse, family violence, criminal acts, para suicide, etc.

There seemed a moment, which we may call the "existential moment" whereby participants came to a realization that they need to change. That moment was usually a traumatic and hurtful experience with drinking and driving. For some the change towards non drinking and driving, or alcohol abstention was short-lived. For others it still continues today.

There was an interesting theme concerning the ease with which young people, with or without a driver's license, under and over 16 years of age, could have access to a vehicle and drive it while drunk. The vehicle could be borrowed (often from grandparents or parents), stolen (people getting charged for driving a stolen van), or owned (by an alcoholic and drinking driver).

A typical pattern in the data is that young people, often under the age of 16 (some the age of 12), without a driver's license, and in some cases, without knowing how to drive, still drove their parents or grandparents home because they were drunk. Those drives were NOT pleasurable experiences. They usually included verbal abuse against the children by the older people.

Sharing Circle participants often included descriptions of parents as alcohol abusers and drinking drivers. They are key role models in the continuation of the cycle of violence and drinking and driving.

Designated drivers, although recognized as a worthwhile safety measure, are almost non existent in the community. Although often tried, designated drivers fail because they succumb to the pressure to drink alcohol.

Horizon does not have adequate personnel/counselors who are trained to intervene in the lives of young people who are experiencing psychological turmoil, lack of personal identity, and/or other mental health difficulties that may lead to deviant behavior like interpersonal violence, alcoholism, suicide, and drinking and driving.

CONCLUSION

The challenge is to describe traffic safety issues like drinking and driving holistically, bucking the trend to victimize people according to pre-defined categories that dominate much of the research world. Many of the experiences featured in this research can easily be reinterpreted and crystallized into a major theme. First Nations people living in Horizon must come together to exchange ideas, feelings, experiences, emotions, and personal histories, and develop a collective voice for the future of the community generally and First Nations people specifically. They should plan for a future where emotional well being is realized and drinking and driving has been reduced to a non existing health risk. To do so they need to reflect on what they can do to start a journey of healing.

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