

**HOPE: ONE PRISONER'S EMANCIPATION**

A dissertation submitted

by

**ALISON GRANGER-BROWN**

to

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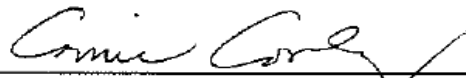
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# HOPE: ONE PRISONER'S EMANCIPATION

Hope: One Prisoner's Emancipation  
by  
Alison Granger-Brown

## Abstract

I would like to think that I chose this study to add to the literature on human development in the prison system. However, I would have to say that the study chose me. It became a deep discovery of what is required for human beings to grow within the context of a prison setting and afterwards in the community. The study explored the life history of an Aboriginal woman once considered to be a volatile, violent, and unmanageable female prisoner by the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC). Changing her life she became a valued volunteer within that prison system.

Human growth and development must be considered with attention to the exogenous influences of all the systems people have to negotiate. I walked with Lora for 14 years: 7 while in custody and 7 afterwards until her death in 2013. During that time she became a mother, a volunteer, peer researcher, cancer patient, and always a teacher.

Since the 1970s there has been a pervasive decline in recognizing rehabilitation potential in people with lives plagued by addictions and the crimes supporting them. I observed the opposite: hundreds of lives changed for the better. There are interventions that kindle the flame and support a fire in people to build a healthy, productive life. Society has a responsibility to fan that fire, rather than feeding the despondency and hopelessness so prevalent in our prisons.

Information was gathered from interviews with Lora, video and audio recordings, her journals and poetry. Interviews were also conducted with family to gain clarity of her

## HOPE: ONE PRISONER'S EMANCIPATION

childhood and complex trauma history and with people who walked with her after prison to elucidate her change process.

The study encompassed literature from modern, post-modern, and Aboriginal epistemology, integrating theory from multiple disciplines. What emerged was how powerful the deleterious influences of complex childhood trauma are, in all domains, over the life span. Counteracting this damage most significantly are the mechanisms of hope and the inspiration of believing in the possibility for successful and lasting change: This is the key-stone to the archway through which people re-enter the community from prison.

Key Words: hope, Aboriginal, transformational learning, resilience, desistance, complex trauma, prison, reintegration, rehabilitation, restorative justice, attachment

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### Acknowledgements

Where to start? This has been a long and arduous rite of passage for me, for Lora, and all those associated with it. Has it been worth it? Unequivocally yes. Lora's journey brought healing to her before she died, ongoing growth for her partner, and changed the trajectory of their son's, now bright, future. It has shone a light on issues I have personally struggled with and through that initiated transformation in my life and relationships. Lora started it all with a sign from the Creator and I will be forever grateful to her, my client, my friend, my teacher.

My husband and three sons have been immensely patient with the long hours I spent "doing time" and the related community commitments I made that took me away from our family. As Lora reported rediscovering what she "liked to do" and I watched her learn to play again, so I will follow her lead and spend more time with my family, listening to the trees and a little less with the books they are made into! Thank you to my parents for a childhood that taught me to care.

To all of Lora's family members and others who so generously shared their stories and sadness helping me to understand just a little about courage and resilience, this work is in honour of your resolution to seek the truth and offer the gift of reconciliation.

To my committee who each in different ways helped to keep me safe on this passage: Miguel has been my mentor for 4 years; his kindness and commitment to my intellectual growth helped me to believe in my own knowledge and wisdom, as well as to think critically about concepts and the theories of others. From the beginning Dorothy kept me grounded and focused; her personal strength and clarity helped me to believe I could do this and it would have value, and as long as I kept her close I knew it would. Connie took

## HOPE: ONE PRISONER'S EMANCIPATION

on this journey as I began the research with family and the difficult emotional and ethical decisions that had to be navigated. Her support for my personal wellbeing and her understanding at a spiritual level the importance of this story will be deeply appreciated forever. Donna and I started together with an immediate rapport and shared concern for human rights and dignity, a gift of support and friendship that will continue until this stage is a faint memory for us both, I hope. Vivian has been my mentor since 2005, constantly bringing our extended research family back to the values. No one could epitomize or personify a life guided by the principles and values of integrity, generosity and gentleness, among many others, more than she does every day, everywhere.

**Dedication**

This work is dedicated to Lora's memory and is written for her son and to those women still imprisoned that she wanted, so much, to help. It is dedicated to all people who have survived trauma-laden childhoods and especially those who find themselves, physically, or spiritually, mentally, and emotionally, imprisoned anywhere. It is particularly dedicated to the Indigenous people of Turtle Island who have, and still do, suffer the effects of cultural and spiritual devastation. In recognizing the connection of all human beings, ultimately what happens to one happens to us all. I repeat again from the dedication in my master's thesis (Granger-Brown, 2007): Humanity will only survive if we stop the violence, recoil and recover from the belief that revenge, retaliation, revulsion, and intolerance are ever justified. Compassion requires nothing of another: It requires everything within us to be open to care, and to give, and to receive, and ultimately we ourselves are the ones who benefit each and every one of us.



**Table of Contents**

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ..... 1

    Why this is of interest. .... 6

    Potential benefits of the study: how it contributes to knowledge. .... 10

    About Lora (Spirit name: High Above the Sky). .... 16

    About me. .... 18

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW ..... 20

Research problem..... 20

    Foundations of Indigenous ways of knowing. .... 21

Trauma ..... 26

    Adverse Childhood Experiences study. .... 29

    Search Institute: Developmental assets. .... 34

Trauma Healing ..... 35

    Western healing practices. .... 35

    Ojibway healing practices. .... 38

    Comparison of Old and New ..... 42

    Summary ..... 46

Mental ..... 49

    Cognitive domain. .... 49

Emotional ..... 73

Physical ..... 80

Spiritual ..... 83

    Spirituality in learning. .... 84

    Ojibway Spirit: Manitou. .... 87

Hope theory..... 89

    Psychology of hope..... 93

    The biology of hope. .... 97

    Developmental processes of learning to hope. .... 101

    Death with hope. .... 104

    Reframing: hope in the shadows..... 105

    Hope and activism..... 106

    Individual and interdependent hope..... 108

    Hope and heart. .... 110

## HOPE: ONE PRISONER’S EMANCIPATION

Summary .....	110
System Interaction .....	111
Summary of the Literature Review .....	113
CHAPTER THREE: Methodology and Methods (Modes of Inquiry).....	115
Personal Reflection .....	115
Reflexivity.....	118
Feminism.....	119
Phenomenology.....	121
Hermeneutics .....	121
Critical Social Science .....	123
Buddhism .....	124
Indigenous Research Paradigm.....	125
Ontology. ....	128
Epistemology. ....	128
Axiology. ....	129
Methodology.....	129
Story.....	130
Narrative Inquiry.....	131
Three-dimensional narrative inquiry space.....	133
Case Study / Life History.....	135
Methods.....	137
Developing my Research Question.....	137
Purposeful conversations. ....	138
Question to initiate and frame the personal stories.....	139
Recruitment.....	140
Implementation of the Project.....	140
Preparation to go to Thunder Bay.....	140
Pilot and Primary Project.....	142
In Thunder Bay.....	142
Armstrong Station.....	143
Data analysis.....	146
CHAPTER FOUR: LORA’S EARLY LIFE EXPERIENCE .....	149
The Formative Years (1971 to 1998): Hurt, Hurting, and Hurting.....	150

## HOPE: ONE PRISONER’S EMANCIPATION

Adverse Early Childhood (ACE) questions .....	151
40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents .....	160
External assets.....	160
Internal assets.....	167
Summary.....	173
CHAPTER FIVE: LORA’S ADULT YEARS .....	174
The Final Years (1999 to 2013): Healing, Harmonizing, and Holding Hope.....	174
Correctional system .....	174
The story of the crime.....	175
Hope and hopeless.....	178
Trust and timing.....	184
Violence.....	187
Child welfare system.....	190
Community / Social System.....	193
Cancer and the Medical System.....	194
CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS AND THE QUALITITES THAT EMERGED.....	197
Curious and critical thinker.....	197
Experiential learner.....	199
Courageous and resilient.....	201
Spiritual.....	206
Teacher and mentor.....	208
Volunteer and change agent.....	210
Forgiving.....	212
Empathic.....	214
Inspiring hope.....	215
People.....	216
The Shadow.....	218
Summary .....	220
Final Words.....	222
CHAPTER SEVEN.....	225
What Does Hope and Transformation Rest Upon?.....	225
Full Circle: From What Was Asked to What is Known and What Must be Asked.....	225
What Was Asked.....	225

## HOPE: ONE PRISONER’S EMANCIPATION

What is Known .....	225
Lost Between Two Cultures.....	226
What was Learned.....	228
Limitations .....	230
Considerations for change.....	231
What Will be Asked.....	242
Summary.....	245
References .....	246

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Informed consent.....269

Appendix B: Project Announcement.....275

Appendix C: Professional Assistance Confidentiality Agreement.....277

Appendix D: Memorial.....278

Appendix E: Remembering Lora.....279

Appendix F: Lora’s Poetry.....290

List of Figures

Figure 1. Manitou written in Canadian Aboriginal Syllabics.....	87
Figure 2. Changing what you focus on.....	106
Figure 3. Lora hands raised .....	208
Figure 4. Model of Lora’s journey to emancipation .....	222

# HOPE: ONE PRISONER'S EMANCIPATION

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

*Grandfather, look at our brokenness. We know that in all creation only the human family has strayed from the sacred way.*

*We know that we are the ones who are divided and we are the ones who must come back together to walk in the sacred way.*

*Grandfather, Sacred One, teach us love, compassion, and honour that we may heal the earth*

*And heal each other. "Kesheyanakwan"*

*(Fast Moving Cloud; <http://www.leadertoleaderjournal.com/article-print-page/courage-and-hope-a-powerful-combination.aspx>),*

Dr. Art Solomon, Ojibway Elder (1914-1997), author of this prayer, was the beacon of hope and inspiration to Aboriginal men and women in Canadian prisons. Through decades of perseverance he won the right for Aboriginal healing methods and traditional ceremonies to be delivered and celebrated in prisons.

I have been working as a recreation therapist among many other duties and responsibilities with federally (2 years and up) and provincially (up to 2 years) sentenced and remanded (awaiting trial) female prisoners for 15 years both in the institutions and in the community following incarceration. For 10 months I worked with federally sentenced men who seriously self-mutilate on a specialized unit. After 5 years I thought perhaps I understood the prison system: not even close. By 10 years I was getting nearer and today feel that I have a small aperture letting in some light on the complexity and the nuances of what we determine to be crime, and the prisons people serve their sentences in. Much is dependent on the dominant religious and political belief systems of the day and resulting in what western society calls justice. We have reduced the work of helping people heal and desist from committing crimes to a reductionist, technology-based intervention separated from language, culture, and spirit.

An excerpt from the Sandy Lake First Nations justice proposal in 1989, cited by Ross (1996), clearly shares the differing concepts of justice between western and traditional Aboriginal perspectives:

Probably one of the most serious gaps in the system is the different perception of wrongdoing and how best to 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 wrongdoing as a *misbehavior which requires teaching or an illness which requires healing*. (emphasis added when cited by Ross, 1996, p. 5)

Synonyms for justice are fairness, impartiality, righteousness, reasonableness, evenhandedness, honesty, integrity, and uprightness. This paper explores the life history of an Aboriginal woman who was exposed to each of these and their antitheses when involved in the justice system and as she left it behind. Other systems that she had to navigate are also discussed because her criminal history and lack of community preparation when re-entering impacted how those interactions played out, often with devastating repercussions. Lora was eventually released directly from a segregation cell with no preparation to a community that was ill-prepared, and unprepared to receive her.

I have borne witness to significant transformational change, healing, and growth within many women in prison, based at least in part on their personal resiliency and the courage to keep trying. I explored this emergent journey from ancient, modern, and post-modern perspectives. My hope is that with emerging research corrections will build trauma-informed practices and programming and that society will understand and better support people in and after prison to develop through this process to a more joyful, productive life, free of crime, and addiction. Perry (2009)



states that “practice, program, and policy must become substance abuse, attachment and neglect informed” (p. 241). He is referring to services for traumatized children but the sentiment is appropriate when applied to the systems that serve the adult survivors of childhood trauma.

I believed it was possible to know more about the phenomenon of transformational change through examining the life of Lora, an Ojibway woman, who achieved freedom from the influences of her oppressive history of neglect, trauma, and racism. Lora's story of resilience, personal development, transformational healing, and *desistance* from crime and addiction is a powerful example of what is possible. The research question is: Why and how did Lora want to change the habitually criminal and violent lifestyle she had led for her first 30 years?

Currently in criminological discussions there are 4 main explanations for *desistance*; the term is used to describe a person halting a criminal lifestyle or in some cases career. The ontogenic explanation is of the aging out process, and the sociogenic thought is in gaining employment and a good life partner. Two others are either based on the rehabilitation /medical model of being fixed and finally there is the notion of learning the lesson through incarceration and never wanting to go back (Maruna, 2001; Stevens, 2012). None of these alone describe the process of Lora leaving the world of violence and crime, creating a new role identity for herself; nor was it a straightforward road. So the question is still, what happens to facilitate a desire for *desistance*, what are the subjective changes that contribute to going straight (Maruna, 2001)?

This study could be described as seeking to understand the experience at the interface and overlap of *desistance* and resilience. The literature explored crossed multiple disciplines recognizing human beings as the living breathing expression of inestimable factors, influenced by both nature and nurture. All the while policy and organizational systems stubbornly hold on to artificial boundaries through silos; disjointed and disconnected (Fitzpatrick, 2011).

*Desistance* is the term stemming from The Liverpool Desistance Study (LDS) conducted by Maruna (2001). It refers to the end of criminal behavior or why and how people stop breaking the laws of society. However a person might have 5 or 10 years free of crime and then relapse, so perhaps it is best understood as a maintenance process to sustain the cessation (Fitzpatrick, 2011).

The study of resilience originated in developmental psychology, and more recently within child and family social work. Depending on the pathway to understanding this concept the meaning might lie in the “better than expected” outcome of a child with adverse experiences. It can also be spoken of as normal development in difficult or adverse conditions. Today it is less considered as simply the outcome of individual traits and strengths and requires the inclusion of context and multiple factors such as socioeconomic issues. In Aboriginal literature on resilience the aspect of the presence of adversity holds true but the individual will achieve success rather than simply overcoming difficulty. Aboriginal scholars discuss the importance of mobilizing the community and the spiritual influences leading to a dynamic process of adjustment, transformation and adaptation often leading to an individual reciprocally changing his

or her environment as well (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008; Kirmayer, Dandeneau, Marshall, Phillips, & Jessen Williamson, 2011; McGuire, 2010; Wilson, 1989).

The similarity lies within possibility so closely associated with hope: Both have an optimistic emphasis on a positive future. Both are processes seeking to recruit personal and social resources such as increased self-efficacy, building positive trusting relationships, and establishing other social ties. Resilience and *desistance* may in the future be understood to have similar underlying mechanisms and required supports and interventions (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Although *desistance* is behaviour focused and resilience becoming more broadly conceptualized, one could argue that *desistance* is based on recruiting resilience factors at long last and hopefully in perpetuity.

Since 2005 I have been a co-investigator with a Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) funded project called “Doing Time” and in 2007 along with the research team I became a founding member of Women In 2 Healing (<http://www.womenin2healing.org/research-projects/>). From these involvements and other research I have learned that housing and employment are important aspects amongst other easily identified factors that support lifestyle change towards *desistance* from crime and addiction. I also know that complex trauma from adverse childhood experiences is ubiquitous in obvious, and sometimes hidden, or unrecognizable events and behaviours.

In 2004 the Correctional Service Canada (CSC) interviewed federally incarcerated women for their views on what they need and what works. Of the Aboriginal women interviewed 79% said that job skill training was necessary and 80% reported needing substance abuse treatment, while 86% said they would need emotional support when

released. I know from the post-incarcerated team members that supportive and nurturing people are very important. I did not know what the early childhood developmental factors or deeper cognitive and emotional shifts were that contribute to change, or how the process begins. Nor did I know the epigenetic, neurological, familial, relational, or other foundational factors that exist and bring people to the possibility for transformation and thereby achieve emancipation from lives of addiction and crime or not.

A group of women that included Lora before her death, all with incarceration experience, who volunteer together in the community, call this the *done button*. These women are curious about this phenomenon for their own interest and to know how to help each other. They want to know why and how some can and have hit the *done button* firmly and others cannot quite find whatever it takes to locate and press it.

**Why this is of interest.**

This is a study of the transformational change of a Canadian woman of the Ojibway tribe who served time in youth, provincial, and federal custody across Canada. However, much of the research and supporting arguments are based on international debates and discussions because, although independent, international events, political changes, and knowledge development are influential on and build from each other. While most of this research comes from the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK), common to all countries is that imprisonment as a sanction to crime targets the minority, marginalized, and poor of any society (Hansen & Charlton, 2013).

Canada has a correctional system not a penal system. It is mandated to operate in accordance with the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA) assented to in 1992 that states in section 3:

The purpose of the correctional system is to contribute to the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society by (a) carrying out sentences imposed by the courts through the safe and humane custody and supervision of offenders; and (b) assisting the rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into the community as law-abiding citizens through the provision of programs in penitentiaries and in the community. (CCRA, 1992, p. 5)

Subsection (b) is the focus of this study to elucidate the successful mechanisms and processes, supports, and specifics of the re-entry and reintegration of women from federal custody. Although criminal justice researchers have explored the issues of community re-entry, the knowledge translation and practical implementation of what has been learned continually falls short of the needs, in part because there is little confidence that anything works.

Between 1977 and 2004 there has been a 757% increase in female incarceration rates in the USA with other developed countries falling not far behind (Herrschaft, Veysey, Tubman-Carbone, & Christian, 2009). Even more troubling for Canada is that Aboriginal women (including Status and non-Status, Métis and Inuit) are grossly overrepresented within that disturbing statistic. In 2006 these women made up 4% of the Canadian population (Wallace & O'Donnell, 2011) but 32.6% of the total female prison population; this means that one out of every three federally incarcerated women in Canada is of Aboriginal descent. There is very little research about this particular prison population (Correctional Service Canada, 2004; Public Safety Canada and The Wesley Group, 2012) and what is gathered by CSC is collected using a classification

tool, the Custody Rating Scale (CRS), which was designed for and tested on a White male population (Public Safety Canada et al. 2012). These women serve significantly longer in custody and are rated at higher security levels than the general female prison population (Eljdupovic, Mitchell, Curtis, Jaremko Bromwich, Granger-Brown, Arseneau, & Fry, 2013).

The inequities and abuse experienced by Indigenous women in Canada are startling realities; for example, among federally sentenced Aboriginal women, 90% have been physically abused, and 61% sexually abused (Correctional Service of Canada, 1990). Female lone-parenthood among Aboriginal families is at 18% compared to 8% of non-Aboriginal (Wallace & O'Donnell, 2011), thus forced to abandon many of their children to the care of the state when sentenced to custody. The report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1995) states:

The time has come to resolve a fundamental contradiction at the heart of Canada: that while we assume the role of defender of human rights in the international community, we retain, in our conception of Canada's origins and make-up, the remnants of colonial attitudes of cultural superiority that do violence to the Aboriginal peoples to whom they are directed. (p. 5)

It is the purpose of this project to share the story and voice of Lora and in so doing perhaps unlock the voice of the many other Aboriginal women who share a similar story of trauma-laden childhoods and racism thinly veiled within the institutional systems of Canada.

For most of the years of working with this complex population I have been lucky to chart my own course and find my way with each person on my case load; matching their interests, strengths, and abilities with individualized interventions to gain their

trust and engagement. A part of my educational journey was in Therapeutic Recreation (TR) which is described by the Canadian Therapeutic Recreation Association website (<http://canadian-tr.org/File/View/320c6149-f0e3-4ba7-b3fc-06c50439d999>):

Therapeutic Recreation is a profession which recognizes leisure, recreation and play as integral components of quality of life. Service is provided to individuals who have physical, mental, social or emotional limitations which impact their ability to engage in meaningful leisure experiences. Therapeutic Recreation is directed toward functional interventions, leisure education and participation opportunities. These processes support the goal of assisting the individual to maximize the independence in leisure, optimal health and the highest possible quality of life.

A profession which involves the assessment of a client's strengths, needs, interests, medical condition, social history, legal status and/or ethnic values/needs; the development of an intervention plan to meet the goals and objectives identified in the assessment; the implementation of an intervention plan and an evaluation to determine whether a client's goals and objectives were met. (p.4)

TR has significantly influenced the unique trauma-informed approaches that I have employed, using layers of learning, for developing life-skills, improving critical thinking, and building relationship while supporting incarcerated women on their journey to healthier, happier, hopeful, pro-social and non-criminal lives.

I have observed truly amazing change in people thought to be beyond rehabilitation: Lora is just one. I have also sadly watched those with potential lose the momentum to move forward and return to the status quo of addiction, crime, and all too often, premature death. I believed that the nurturance of hope by a person, either a friend or a mentor, would prove significant in this story, but how? I wanted to know if there was a core strength within some individuals and if so, what creates and supports it, and if not, what could we discover about this potential?

**Potential benefits of the study: how it contributes to knowledge.**

One important aspect of this study is the exploration of the role-transformation of people who do leave the cycle of criminal life. Although role theory has been well developed the main focus has been on role entry but little work has been focused on role exit (Herrschaft et al., 2009). Lora exited the role of criminal and entered the role of citizen and mother; she is a powerful example of a woman considered by many correctional personnel to be beyond hope for reintegration and rehabilitation and so her story has the potential to breathe new life into the “what works, nothing works” discussion that is well known in criminological discussions.

Although this immediate discussion is from the American criminological dialogue it has had significant although slightly delayed impact on Canadian sentencing and justice policy. Lipton, Martinson, and Wilks' (1975) publication all but silenced rehabilitation discussion, and must be revitalized if society is to move beyond the commodification of human beings in the prison industrial complex (Christie, 2000; Duguid, 2000).

The hush began in large part because of the Lipton et al. (1975) meta-analysis of 231 research reports on rehabilitation programs between 1945 and 1967 in American (USA) and international prisons. It was called *The Effectiveness of Correctional Treatment: A Survey of Treatment Evaluation Studies* and was to become the most influential criminological study in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Millar, 1989). Martinson (1974) stated in *National Affairs* that “With few and isolated exceptions, the rehabilitation efforts that have been reported so far have had little or no appreciable effect on recidivism” (p. 25).



*Recidivism* is a complex term easily oversimplified to mean the rate of return to prison. In fact, to be calculated correctly information including details of the severity of the new crime or the length of time between convictions and other such factors must be considered for it to have useful meaning. For example more than 50% of people returning to prison do so for violating a parole or probation order but have not committed any new crime (Kenmore & Roldan, 2006). Smith, Goggin, and Gendreau (2002) conducted a meta-analysis demonstrating that harsher sentencing actually increased recidivism slightly. Incarceration instead of community sentencing also increased recidivism slightly and there is indication that sanctions may affect females more negatively than males. Although the database is imperfect, the dataset was immense comprising over 442,000 offender records (Smith et al., 2002). There is “absolutely no cogent theoretical or empirical rationale for criminal justice sanctions to suppress criminal behavior ... at best criminal justice sanctions are threats” (p. 20).

Smith et al. (2002) state that there must be evaluative research in concert with prison authorities to examine sensitively what actually happens behind the fence to understand how people change their behavior, attitudes, and beliefs. Connecting this understanding “to recidivism will uncover who may benefit or be harmed by prison life and by how much” (pp. 21-22). Lora’s story has potential to add detailed and unique new knowledge to this discussion.

There was considerable press coverage of the Lipton et al. (1975) publication and an immediate adoption of its message in the USA by both liberal and conservative thinkers alike. According to Millar (1989), conservative thinkers found support for their argument for harder sentencing and tougher handling of prisoners and by civil

libertarians who were conversely concerned with the injustice of indeterminate sentencing if indeed nothing worked. The case of *Mistretta v. the United States* is an example of this shift in thinking at work.

In 1989 in the case of *Mistretta v. United States*, the Congressional Sentencing Reform Act part of Comprehensive Crime Control Act No. 98-1017 was questioned. The Act was passed into law on October 12, 1984 in an attempt to increase consistency in United States federal sentencing

([http://www.ussc.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/about/overview/USSC\\_Overview.pdf](http://www.ussc.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/about/overview/USSC_Overview.pdf)).

The Act had created sentencing guidelines that removed rehabilitation from serious consideration when sentencing people to prison. In response to *Mistretta* the Supreme Court of the United States upheld the 1984 Act and stated that “[r]ehabilitation as a sound penological theory came to be questioned and, in any event, was regarded by some as an unattainable goal for most cases” (§. 11). The Supreme Court went on to cite a Senate report that “referred to the ‘outmoded rehabilitation model’ for federal criminal sentencing, and recognized that the efforts of the criminal justice system to achieve rehabilitation of offenders had failed” (§. 13). It is important to notice that this took place some years after Martinson recanted his conclusions. The fallout continued as the average prison sentence length increased by 36% from 1990 to 2009 (Laudano, 2013).

In 1979 Martinson announced that their analysis was flawed and tried to undo the harm he realized had been created by the zealous adoption of the false and, as time has shown it to be, dangerous publication from 1974. He published an article, "New Findings, New Views: A Note of Caution Regarding Sentencing Reform," in the

*Hofstra Law Review*. According to Millar (1989) this is "probably the most infrequently read article in the criminal justice debate on rehabilitation" (¶. 27). Indeed Martinson (1979) states, "new evidence from our current study leads me to reject my original conclusion ... the evidence in our new survey is simply too overwhelming to ignore" (p. 252). It was extraordinarily difficult to get a copy of the publication, not even available from the *Hofstra Law Review*. The press had touted the original research far and wide and simply reported that "nothing works" but did not pick up on the new evidence with the same enthusiasm. According to Maruna (2001) and Millar (1989) Martinson was so distressed when he realized that recanting the conclusion was not being debated or heard, he committed suicide by jumping from an eighth-floor window.

In 1993 at a conference of the UK Conservative government, the Home Secretary Michael Howard announced that prison works. This announcement was in keeping with the "reactionary politics of the previous decade in both the UK and the USA" (Burnett & Maruna, 2004, p. 390). However, Howard had made a number of errors in interpreting the research and in particular of reducing the complexity of criminal behavior to a rational-choice model. This resulted in his linking the levels of crime to an offenders' perception of the risks of being convicted and punished. Following this pronouncement, and further accompanying rhetoric, the prison population increased. The sentencing to immediate custody in magistrates' court increased from 4% in 1999 to 14% in 2000 and in Crown Court from 43% to 64% in the same period (Burnett & Maruna, 2004).

Similarly the Canadian correctional system is experiencing significant growth due to a political view supporting increased punishment both in length and making harder time for offenders. The Truth in Sentencing Act ([http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/annualstatutes/2009\\_29/page-1.html](http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/annualstatutes/2009_29/page-1.html)), assented to in 2009, has caused the building of 2,700 federal prison beds (<http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/about-us/006-0008-eng.shtml>) across the country for both males and females at an estimated extra cost of over \$4 billion to the taxpayer. From my professional experience I have observed that the harder the time is made for offenders, the harder also for staff.

According to the research of Piche (2011; <http://tpcp-canada.blogspot.ca/2011/09/are-provinces-and-territories-ready-for.html>), the estimated cost to the provinces and territories is the need to build 23 new provincial-territorial prisons and 16 additions to existing facilities. This will result in 7,348 new prisoner beds at a construction-related cost for these projects estimated at \$3.049 billion and still rising. According to the Elizabeth Fry Society of Peterborough website (<http://www.efryptbo.org/pages/facts.html>) the cost of incarcerating a woman in federal prison is now between \$175,000 per year for lower security settings up to \$250,000 per year for women held in the most isolated and segregated conditions. This demonstrates that the costs are related to security and not to rehabilitation programming. Hansen and Charlton (2013), state that “justice is political” (p. 52).

An exploration of the literature on the topic of criminal rehabilitation undertaken for my master's degree thesis (Granger-Brown, 2007) showed a significant decrease in research and publications about prison education and rehabilitation programs after the late 1970s and when the Rockefeller Drug Laws (RDL) were enacted. With the 1980s

the war on drugs grew in momentum, the war on crime gained in popularity, and the treatment of prisoners and any concept of their potential for valued citizenship faded from the public and academic discussion (Christie, 2000). With this war came “striking racial and ethnic disparities so apparent in RDL incarceration rates [which] have helped sustain a bitter sense of injustice in the minority community” (Drucker, 2002). It appears that a country’s rate of imprisonment is largely a matter of political ideology and choice. Social explanations for crime lose their value while stipulating more social controls and less welfare dependency, with offenders portrayed as the enemy (Burnett & Maruna, 2004).

To my knowledge and searching the literature I can find few papers exploring the concept of transformational change or healing of the prison population. In my search I found few dissertations on this topic; one is specifically tied to a particular program delivered in the correctional setting, the second is about Aboriginal men. The third looked at the transformational change of female youth, who moved beyond the system to successful adulthood (Maller, 2009). My hope is that Lora’s story will re-ignite the “what works” debate with a more positive outlook at least within the Canadian correctional system that is familiar with her both as a dangerous and difficult prisoner and subsequently as a valued volunteer in the maximum security unit of the very prison where she herself was incarcerated.

Support people and mentors were confirmed to be an important factor in healing and *desistance*, and therefore it is hoped this will be a valuable document for volunteer organizations to validate their work. At this time in Canada the non-profit

organizations, that many volunteers are associated with, are losing funding and being insidiously and gradually phased out of the correctional institutional settings.

**About Lora (Spirit name: High Above the Sky).**

The relationship of particular importance for this project that developed early in my corrections career was with Lora whose journey deepened my quest to understand the phenomenon of gaining freedom. She was sentenced to 8 years for a violent crime and when we first met in 1999 she was considered to be one of the most unmanageable and violent female prisoners in Canada. Our alliance developed slowly and sometimes painfully and enriched both of our lives. She transformed her life and therefore also the future for her young son and, by his traveling alongside her, that of the boy's father. He hit the "done button" on April 23<sup>rd</sup> in 2009 and is now stable and caring for their son as Lora is deceased after a determined and courageous fight with cancer that ended on February 12, 2013. Her hope was for this project to highlight the possibility of change in all prisoners.

She broke the cycle of addiction and abuse that has plagued her family for generations since *contact* with Europeans and especially her parents' residential school experience. She did so against the predictions of almost all of the correctional staff who ever worked with her, it began with one warden who believed in the human potential for growth and change. The warden offered her the opportunity to work with any member of staff she felt she could trust and learn with: She picked me. According to Lora she first met me when I was standing in a shaft of sunlight from a skylight as she was contemplating this conundrum posed by the warden:

I said okay Creator, show me who to work with. So Alison Granger-Brown was walking through and this beam of light from a window way up in the foyer shone right on her. So I said, okay! To this day I work with her. We did a lot, art, and she got me involved in all kinds of stuff. (Coast, 2010, p. 15)

After this apparent sign and some background checking on me she decided that I should do anger management with her. My weak protestations went unheeded and now 15 years later I am so grateful for what we learned together.

Here Lora will introduce herself as she did at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in 2008 (<http://ccphe.familymed.ubc.ca/files/2012/04/December-2008-Conference-Report.pdf>)



My name is Lora and I am a former inmate of the system. I am now a mother and I do community support with Women in 2 Healing. I was born and raised by the trap line. It is kind of hard to go from the bush into the prison system; well it was hard for me, but I got used to being in the system, because I spent most of my life in there. “Inside” you never think about the outside, that is one thing you never think about because there are a lot of times that people become depressed and suicidal and things like that, but if you want to survive in the inside you have to forget about the outside. And that is one thing that I learned while I was inside: forgetting about feeling outside.

There are a lot of things that you have to watch out for while inside, and I really think that is why I liked to be in segregation, because you don't have to focus on anybody, you don't have to worry about getting involved in anything, getting in trouble with anybody or getting into arguments with the correctional officers about where I was supposed to be and when I was supposed to be there. I loved the idea of being the bad and the worst that I could possibly be inside, [then] I met the prison recreational therapist.

She brought me out of my way of thinking. She helped me grow out of my way of thinking by showing me a lot of stuff we did inside of prison and one of them was to find out what I like to do. I like to be out in the wilderness, be out in the bush, and stuff like that; going out for a walk in the community, out in the bush or out in the parks and jogging, and stuff like that. Those are what I really enjoy.

When [the recreational therapist] and I met up it was really good and I felt safe around her because she showed all of the hurdles and how to handle stuff. It was comfortable. I could tell her stuff without getting in trouble and I knew that it was a safe person. When she introduced me into Women in2 Healing, I became really good

at it and then the women opened their arms to me. I live a real positive lifestyle now; it is different; just my son and me. (p. 20-21)

From my reflection on this personally significant relationship and observing her life journey during and after incarceration I identified some foundational theories that I believed would prove useful in designing this project and undertaking the literature review. My search began with the 4 most significant domains of human life: mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual. Within those areas transformational learning, hope, and systems theory became obvious places to explore. Lora wrote in her journals about her healing journey that she left to me in the hope that I would write her story. Her writing, poetry, and the video and audio recording that she left me were important in helping me to know where to look and what to read and most particularly what she thought and experienced.

**About me.**

My reflection on Lora since her passing and to honour the promise I made to keep her alive for her son in telling our stories and researching her life history, has led to deepening my respect for her and uncovering just how much she impacted my life. I bore witness to insidious racism that I might never otherwise have known. I sat beside her shaking spirit as her son was taken from her and watched helplessly for 18 months as two particular child protection social workers bullied and threatened her relationship with him.

I learned so much about her Anishinaabe (Ojibway) worldview through her childhood stories and interactions with the world and even at 42, and 7 years post incarceration, modern life still seemed foreign and unnatural to her. She would often



look sideways at me and say, “hey Alison why do people got to be that way?” I have yet to find an appropriate or convincing answer.

Reciprocity in our shared hope and transformation of us both is how I think of our relationship, walking the same road in the end but each from a different point of origin and each with a different map: yet something so connecting, compelling, and so strangely familiar. For this reason it would be impossible to bracket myself out of this story; I will, however, strive to let her personality, humour, strength, and uniqueness shine through the words of others, her poetry, and journals, as well as from my memories.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Research problem

Healing from complex trauma towards *desistance* from crime and addiction is a long journey through what at times seems like a very dark never-ending tunnel. That journey requires supportive and knowledgeable people, sensitive to the multiple factors and skills required for success. The other important role is for the holding and maintenance of hope that it is possible for everyone to achieve a pro-social life worth living. These factors can be considered as building social and human capital in the lives of people with trauma histories and incarceration experience.

This literature review develops through sections based on holistic, modern, post-modern, and ancient Aboriginal approaches to understanding human growth and development in relation to transformational learning, and healing from complex childhood trauma. Lifespan development is multifaceted and dynamic. Billions of interactions across micro and macro domains result in unique individual expressions of genetic potential. Maltreatment of many descriptions from drug and alcohol exposure to non-nurturance and physical, emotional, sexual, and spiritual violence disrupts this process (Perry, 2009).

Presented are the dialectic of old and new understandings, the Aboriginal and Western, the hard and the soft, knowing that there is always truth in all. No Aboriginal story can be told without situating it where necessary within the historical context of existence within colonization and assimilation practices and policies; these are addressed throughout. Existentialism (Crowell, 2010) is a current of inquiry not about existence in general but specifically about human existence:

Human beings can be understood neither as substances with fixed properties, nor as subjects interacting with a world of objects.... On the existential view, to understand what a human being is it is not enough to know all the truths that natural science—including the science of psychology—could tell us. (¶. 2-3)

Human beings must be understood by the complex interaction of all these systems of physiology, biology, psychology, spirituality, and social connections: and understood within the context of the universal system. This literature review could be visualized as a double helix of trauma and transformation, with the supporting information cross-coded throughout the chapter being the building blocks of the molecules for healing. Firstly, however, as this is the story of an Aboriginal woman I will begin with an overview of what I discovered in trying to understand Aboriginal peoples' philosophy of healing practices, epistemology, and respectful terminology.

#### **Foundations of Indigenous ways of knowing.**

What exactly is in a name? This is an important question to begin this section as there are many ways the Indigenous people of this continent have been and are referred to: "The term Aboriginal is the legally applied term in Canada and includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples" (Absolon, 2008, p. 26). Indigenous means a set of rights or claims based on historical ties to a particular territory. Native can have a similar meaning in that a person is a native of a place or speaks their native language. However, native can also have a disparaging or patronizing connotation as has been the case at times since colonization. *Indian* was the erroneous term used by Columbus in thinking he had reached India in 1492 (McPherson & Rabb, 2011). The first peoples of the American continent may be referred to in the United States as Native American; in Canada they may be spoken of as the First Nations Peoples, Aboriginal

or Indigenous people, Natives, or Native Indians. Being more specific the Inuit will be named and also those with European inter-racial heritage are called Métis (Faith, 1993; Smylie, 2000). Lora often referred to herself as Native and as Anishinaabe or Ojibway in naming her tribal heritage. Anishinaabe means the original people and is literally translated as spontaneous beings (Warren, 1885).

As I have learned more about the history, traditions, and wisdoms of Aboriginal people I have come to be more specific in recognizing a particular tribe such as Cree, Lakota, or Ojibway. According to Wilson (2008) there is a growing awareness of the similarities of the Aboriginal peoples worldwide and Indigenous scholars are in the process of reshaping, redefining, and explaining their positions and protocols. However for this study it is helpful to begin exploring Aboriginal ways of knowing in general and then becoming more detailed about Anishinaabe wisdom.

At its core Aboriginal knowledge is drawn from an intimate relationship with the natural world, by careful observations in daily lives over time and with deep reflection. It is based on human feelings, ideas, and actions and shared through story set in the time, space, and the company of the moment (Cajete, 2000; Kirmayer et al., 2011; McGuire, 2010; Sefa Dei, Hall & Goldin Rosenberg, 2000). According to Little Bear (2000) philosophy, values, and customs must be considered and he particularly calls for sensitivity to language as it embodies the way a society thinks. Ojibway scholar Corbiere (2000) is advocating for teaching Ojibway/Odawa language in schools in Ontario. He states that without their language their culture will die; it is part of a holistic education which teaches positive self-image and healthy identity and will be explored further in the early development of trait hope. Names, spirit guardians, clans,

social organizations, all consist of animal, bird, or fish names. The collective identity of Aboriginal people is interwoven with these animals, with place and community.

Identity, according to Restoule (2000) is of a fixed nature holding continuity over a given period of time. However in keeping with a verb-rich approach to language Restoule moves from discussing *Aboriginal identity* to *identifying as Aboriginal* allowing for a more liberating way of conceiving self-definition. Identifying as Aboriginal, he believes, is about knowing from an inside place, from the self, the community, and traditional knowledge.

Aboriginal languages are mainly non-binary constructing a complementary philosophy of the world (Kovach, 2005). Although there are words for male and female, man and woman, spoken Ojibway does not refer to he or she, but to all people as being animate ([http://www.pimsleurapproach.com/blog/language-learning/the-ojibwe-two-spirit-person](http://www.pimsleurapproach.com/blog/language-learning/the-<u>ojibwe-two-spirit-person</u>)). The languages are verb-rich, process or action oriented, descriptive of happenings rather than of objects, and always speak in relationship (Ross, 1995). According to Richardson (2000), “[I]language constructs the individual’s subjectivity in ways that are historically and locally specific” (p. 929). Language is not the result of a person’s individuality, nor does it reflect social reality, rather it creates social reality and from that we draw meaning, reflected in our uniqueness. It captures how the Ojibway people think and see their relationship with the earth. The word *kinomaage* literally translates as “the earth shows us the way” and it refers to their educational philosophy (<http://learningfromtheearth.org/kinomaage/>).

Although there are unique languages, discreet practices and wisdoms there is also a shared epistemology. For example, Null (1998) explains that there is underlying

purpose in most American Indian ceremonies and that purpose is “to help humans know themselves and the world by connecting through the earth to a higher power” (p. 3). Crawford-O'Brien (2008) believes that “healing is fundamentally about meaning making and is often deeply spiritual” (p. 4). She sees pathology in the West understood as a lack of capacity for independence. Aboriginal belief is that health resides in reciprocity and “self-as-relationship” (Wilson, 2001a, p. 91). Therefore pathology lays in the lack of capacity for interdependence, including the relationship with all of humanity, nature and the cosmos (McGuire, 2010; Crawford-O'Brien, 2008; Walters, Simoni, & Evans-Campbell, 2002). According to Four Arrows, Cajete, and Lee (2010) healing is also about telling your own truth. Further in the paper a specific discussion of Anishinaabe (Ojibway) healing practices is included stemming from their belief that physical or mental illness resides in “dis-ease” of the soul and that without soul the body will weaken and die (Duran, 2006; Grim, 1983; Kelm, 1998).

Elders as the traditional carriers and transferors of knowledge deliver ancient wisdom paced with the rate of change in the natural environment. They share the cultural norms and values through story, and within relationships, when needed for growth or healing (Hansen & Charlton, 2013). Stories are always told with an obligation to consider the readiness of the learner to use the knowledge responsibly. These practices form an iterative process, constantly evaluating and reinterpreting information: a living system of knowledge with revisions made whenever necessary, laying no claim to universality (Castellano, 2000; Sarris, 1993). Aboriginal cultures regard rational and intuitive thought as complementary (Hansen & Charlton, 2013).

Revealed knowledge is also highly valued coming from visions, dreams, and intuition; it is considered spiritual in origin. Visions are distinct from dreams and can occur in either a fully conscious or semi-conscious state; sometimes the altered state may be induced by lack of food, heat exhaustion, or sleep deprivation (Jilek, 1982). Dreams are the creative gateways to possibility and are applied for practical use. Introspection is a significant practice and method for acquiring incorporeal knowledge of the dynamic complexity of reality in existence and harmony with the cosmos; in this way lessons from the environment can be internalized (Cajete, 2000; Castellano, 2000; Steinhauer, 2002). The result is similar revelations to those from meditative practices in almost every other religious or spiritual tradition, such as insight meditations of Buddhism and the Yoga Sutras and the contemplative practices of Christianity. “Through inward exploration tapping into creative forces that run through all life, individuals come to subjectively experience a sense of wholeness” (Hart, 2010, p. 8). These are practices to heal the psyche and whole being.

The medicine man or woman is a person with knowledge beyond the use of herbs and rituals; she or he incorporates spiritual power or supernatural gifts, connecting physical and spiritual worlds so medicine and religion become two sides of the same coin (Hultkrantz, 1992; Null, 1998). The importance of connection to the land is powerful and foundational to Aboriginal resilience which is an emerging area of research, based on exploring the ability to seek success rather than simply overcoming adversity, a social-ecological view (Kirmayer et al., 2011; McGuire, 2010; Wilson, 1989). While allopathic medicine is accessed by American and Canadian Aboriginal

people, according to Hultkrantz (1992), the work of a psychotherapist is less so as this is seen directly as the work for the Elder or the medicine man or woman.

Aboriginal communities are inclusive and share traditions and knowledge primarily orally and experientially. Those excluded from the story circles, debates, and discussions rarely accept the legitimacy of the written accounts because authentic information is believed to be dynamic and once scribed it may no longer be active or alive. Writing absolves individuals from remembering and may dilute the complexity of knowledge that can potentially be kept alive within any culture (Struthers, 2001). Ultimately the true test of valuable knowledge in Aboriginal belief is whether or not it enhances the capacity for social and communal living, is future oriented, organic and holistic (Castellano, 2000). Native science, as named by Cajete (2000), is concerned with connecting instinctual ways of learning and innate human knowledge in relation to the intelligence of the Earth: Health lives in the heart mind wisdom and is seen as a microcosm of universal intelligence (Bear Heart & Larkin, 1998; Cajete, 2000; Null, 1998). According to Four Arrows et al. (2010), we must maintain an organic grounding while also utilizing the new technologies of Western neuroscience to avoid being led further away from what humans must do to live in harmony on this planet.

### **Trauma**

A general definition of trauma is that it is an event or disturbing experience that caused emotional shock or physical injury and may damage the mind, body or spirit of a being. This simple definition leaves this word open for overuse and a vague sense of the severity of the experience. Maté (2009, p. 36) states that while not all addiction is



rooted in abuse, "A hurt is at the centre of all addictive behaviours." Herman (1997) explains it most beautifully:

Traumatic events breach attachments of family, friendship, love, and community. They shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others. They undermine the belief systems that give meaning to human experience. They violate the victim's faith in a natural or divine order and cast the victim into a state of existential crisis. (p. 51)

Poverty can do all of these things and yet we do not often consider the ramifications of deprivation in setting the stage for a lifetime of depression and other mental illnesses. Regardless of adult economic stability the impacts of childhood poverty predict increased morbidity in physical illnesses resulting in premature mortality. Studies suggest that early poverty is a risk factor for subsequent psychopathology, particularly externalizing disorders such as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD). Evans and Cassells (2014) found that lower socioeconomic status at age 2 led to increases in antisocial behavior up to age 14.

For Aboriginal women, attention must also be paid to the systemic issues including intergenerational trauma so that the collective suffering of oppressive laws and policies through colonization and residential schools is not overlooked (Public Safety Canada, et al., 2012). Diseases associated with colonization and contacts with Europeans were used to prove the susceptibility and weakness of Aboriginal people and to rationalize the right of the dominant immigrant culture to rule. Thus humanitarianism through medical care, education, and so forth, becomes integral to colonialism; inextricably linked with racial superiority and the right to decide what is best for *them*. Similar to the notion of blaming the Aboriginal people for their susceptibility to disease there is a tendency at times to blame them entirely for their poverty, unemployment, addiction

rates, and high numbers in prisons. There is little recognition of the contribution of factors far beyond their control such as social policy, legislation, and of course historical trauma.

However there is the other part of this story told through the successes of Aboriginal communities to harness the resilience of their people and reshape their own destinies. Across British Columbia there has been a resurgence of Aboriginal healing practices, standing up to such dangerous enemies as Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus (HIV) and Tuberculosis (TB). Sweat lodges and healing circles are being incorporated into patient care in hospitals, hospices, and treatment centres as well as correctional facilities (Kelm, 1998).

Traumatic stress must be understood holistically as the result of experiences impacting the organismic functioning and human adaptation of the physiology, psychology, social-relational, and cultural domains (Walker, 1989). However as pointed out by Wilson (1989):

Many survivors possess a wisdom about life and are grounded in the ability to discern the genuine from the fake; the sincere from the manipulative; the nurturing from the exploitative; the spiritual from the spiritually impacted; the altruistic from the egocentric; the animated from the stagnant; the integrated from disconnected; the self-determined from the socially conforming; and the loving from the hateful. (p. 262)

Depending on the age of the occurrence trauma can have specific deleterious effects on life-course growth and development. These effects can be either intensification of current stages or regressive, perhaps even reactivating previously solved conflicts or crises as described by Erikson's psychosocial developmental stages (Berger, 1983). Trauma victims may well develop a new or distorted view of society and its value.

Survivors may feel like outsiders with a new identity who carry with them the taint and shame or guilt of the trauma (Wilson, 1989), particularly if there is deliberate violence or a sexual nature to the violation. According to van der Kolk (2002), there are a number of psychological problems that are associated with trauma not included under the rubric of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) but classified as co-morbid. These include depression, self-hatred, dissociation, depersonalization, aggressive behavior, intimacy issues, and impairment in experiencing enjoyment from life. These are frequently the symptoms that cause patients to be admitted for treatment and are common and problematic in the prison setting, especially due to the prevalence of impaired capacity for self-regulation. He believes that these people are most likely to have experienced multiple traumas leading to the term *complex PTSD*.

#### **Adverse Childhood Experiences study.**

An excellent place to set the stage for this exploration is from the work of the Adverse Childhood Experiences research (ACE; <http://www.cdc.gov/ace/index.htm>). The ACE study is a collaborative epidemiological project between the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, GA and Kaiser Permanente in San Diego, CA; it is currently being replicated in Canada, China, Jordan, Norway, the Philippines, and the United Kingdom.

Afifi, MacMillan, Boyle, Taillieu, Cheung, and Sareen, (2014) recently published findings that corroborate the ACE study. Their focus was on mental health issues, finding “robust associations between child abuse and mental conditions” (p. E324). Canadians over the age of 18 were invited to respond to a survey. A completion rate of 79.8%, revealed a 32.1% history of child abuse, either sexual, physical, or exposure

to intimate partner violence. All types of child abuse were associated with all conditions, with a dose-response relationship. Increasing numbers of abuse types was related to greater odds of mental health problems with the strongest for drug dependence, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts. "Posttraumatic stress disorder and learning disability remained associated with sexual abuse and certain individual types of physical abuse" (pp. E328-329).

The main focus in this area of study is to understand the neurobiological deviations that result from early life trauma causing changes to areas of the brain that mediate mood, anxiety, healthy bonding with other people, and memory. The ACE study definition of adverse childhood experiences includes growing up in a household with any or all of the following:

- ✓ emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, or neglect
- ✓ an alcoholic, or illicit drug user
- ✓ someone mentally ill or suicidal
- ✓ violence toward the mother.

Slopen, Kubzansky, McLaughlin, and Koenen (2013) also studied early life experiences that have lasting effects on neurobiological functioning and health outcomes across the life course. They too found that adverse childhood experiences or traumas including poverty, maltreatment, or maladaptive early family environments were associated with a broad spectrum of subsequent health problems in adulthood. These include cardiovascular disorders, metabolic abnormalities, cancers, arthritis, and mental illnesses (Briere & Scott, 2006).

The ACE project found that at a critical time in early life, negative experiences may exert a disproportionate influence on neuronal development creating the conditions for childhood and adult depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress symptoms (Felitti, Anda, Nordenberg, Williamson, Spitz, Edwards, Koss, & Marks, 1998). Functional neuroanatomical and physiologic systems are interactive and integrated, therefore behaviors and health problems cannot generally be attributed to the function of any single or particular system; every individual system is connected and interdependent.

Siegel (2011) describes the damage done to an immature brain through trauma and neglect as interfering with the development of connecting fibers. Structures such as the corpus callosum, pre-frontal cortex, and hippocampus show diminished connectivity among adults from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Evans & Cassells, 2014), but why? This sets the stage for a mind that is fractured and never fully integrated during development. The mind is a relational process including the relationship with self but if cluttered with missed connections and incomplete maps or representations of our world it will fail to connect healthily. As the developmental process organizes, the brain structure grows from lower regions (brainstem and diencephalon) projecting and differentiating target cells to higher function regions: The clinical implications of this are that the timing of a traumatic event or prolonged neglect and trauma will impact the brain uniquely and specifically (Perry, 2009). When the stress response mechanisms are activated repeatedly over a prolonged period, there will be an alteration in the baseline activity and reactivity of the stress response systems “the brain will reset – acting as if the individual is under persistent threat” (p. 244).

Siegel (2011) describes a triangle of well-being, as the integration of mind, brain, and relationships. Frattaroli (2001) concurs that mental illness is more than simply a chemical imbalance in the brain but rather, “a *disharmony* of body, brain, mind, and spirit within the whole person: an inner conflict of the soul” (p. 9). This matches the Ojibway notion of illness as being rooted in “soul-loss” (Duran, 2006; Grim, 1983; Jilek, 1986).

Over 17,000 Kaiser Permanente patients who participated in routine health screenings voluntarily joined in the ACE study (van der Kolk, 2005). The results are revealing substantial evidence of the health, social, and economic damage and risks that result from childhood trauma. I completed the ACE rating for Lora as part of the data analysis in Chapter 4. From the information she shared with me and also from the interviews with family members, she rates as a 10/10. The complete questionnaire is accessible in a World Health Document *Preventing Child Maltreatment: A guide to taking action and generating evidence*

([http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2006/9241594365\\_eng.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2006/9241594365_eng.pdf)). The traumatic stress field has adopted the term *complex trauma* to describe the experience of multiple, prolonged, and chronic physical, sexual, or emotional violations frequently within the child's caregiving setting (van der Kolk, 2005); this was Lora's early life.

Felitti et al. (1998) found a significant graded relationship between the breadth of childhood exposure to abuse and or household dysfunction with multiple risk factors for several leading causes of death in adulthood, such as

- ✓ smoking,
- ✓ alcohol and drug abuse,

- ✓ obesity,
- ✓ physical inactivity,
- ✓ promiscuity,
- ✓ suicide attempts

An ACE score of 4 or more increased the likelihood of attempting suicide by 12 times, of becoming an alcoholic by 7 and to inject street drugs by 10 times

([www.acestudy.org](http://www.acestudy.org)). In many cases these behaviours act to alleviate emotional and social pain, despondency, and hopelessness, and while considered by health care providers and justice systems to be the problem, they are in fact the solution for the patients or prisoners (Hansen & Charlton, 2013). Such coping mechanisms and habits are short-term solution with deleterious, dangerous, and sometimes deadly outcomes, and sadly according to Maté (2009), “the addict sees no other possible existence for himself” (p. 43). Perry (2009), states that over 80% of children removed by protective services in the US have significant developmental problems, and because these are rarely treated they continue to influence the developmental processes.

Walsh (2011) believes that mental health professionals have significantly underestimated the importance of lifestyle factors as contributing to multiple psychopathologies. Due to the effects of traumatic stress in childhood on the hippocampus, it is recognized that retrospective reports of childhood abuse are likely to be underestimated. This was certainly true in the recollections of Lora. Her family corroborated every story she had shared and told me many more to further validate the correlation of trauma and increase in health, social, and economic risks.

**Search Institute: Developmental assets.**

Collateral to a traumatic childhood setting is the lack of assets to support and nurture resiliency in a child facing adversity. In 1990 the Search Institute identified a set of skills, experiences, relationships, and behaviours that proved to be protective and supportive of children to develop into successful and contributing adults. This framework continued to develop a set of 40 assets, 20 internal, such as a sense of purpose and 20 external such as positive peer influence. The complete list is available from the Search Institute website (<http://www.search-institute.org/research/developmental-assets>). Lora's early life was fraught with traumatic events and was significantly lacking in the listed external assets. Her courage and transformation may well lie in the internal assets, details of which emerged from the data particularly her ability to maintain hope. The assets inventory is also used for the framework of Chapter 4.

According to a World Health Organization (WHO) report on the social determinants of health (2003), poor social and economic circumstances impact early development affecting health throughout life and shorten life expectancy significantly. Risks to the developing child are much higher among the poor and marginalized but this can be mitigated by education and support. Evans and Cassells (2014) agree that early intervention is helpful, but if the risk factors that cross multiple domains of life (e.g., home and school) are not alleviated early on then the outcome for the adult will not be mitigated by economic improvement.



## **Trauma Healing**

### **Western healing practices.**

This section will explore the foundations of our approaches to support the healing of human beings from complex trauma, be it a physical injury or damage to the cognitive and emotional wellbeing; either may potentially result in social and spiritual disequilibrium. Although the immediate results of a trauma may affect one aspect more severely than another, they are in fact interrelated. While the primary work may be needed to respond to a physical emergency, balance must be achieved in caring for the accompanying damage to psyche, spirit, and social functioning (Wilson, 1989). Likewise emotional trauma can lead to significant disequilibrium of neuropeptides, blood sugar mechanisms, and many other physiological and biological functions, leading to physical illness. Imbalance can cause depression, fatigue, and other somatic responses potentially leading to serious ill health (Walker, 1989). Mind, body, and spirit must be considered individually and interdependently as aspects of one complex system of systems, including social systems especially in complex trauma and in the therapy and or support offered.

Rogers (1961) makes many statements relating to the motivation to undertake therapy applying to the life journey of many people; this is just one:

the urge, which is evident in all organic and human life—to expand, extend, become autonomous, develop, mature—the tendency to express and activate all the capacities of the organism or the self. This tendency may become deeply buried under layer after layer of encrusted psychological defenses; it may be hidden behind elaborate façades which deny its existence; but it is my belief that it exists in every individual, and awaits only the proper conditions to be released and expressed. (p. 35)

Individuals move, Rogers (1961) believes, from a fixed cognitive structure through change to a new way of thinking: “changingness, from rigid structure to flow, from stasis to process” (p. 130). Rogers described the process as happening over seven stages of deepening the therapeutic relationship throughout. He noted the importance of the client being “received” by the therapist until, in Stage 6, the client finds a new phenomenon, the emergence of “a tender concern for me” (p. 146). This he said, is irreversible and the client will cruise on to stage 7 almost without the therapist.

Healing is spiritual growth and improving self-efficacy.

Trauma healing in the realm of cognitive and emotional damage can be divided into techniques that work on the mind and those that are somatically based. Traditional psychotherapy approaches the management of disruptive emotions from a top-down perspective, working from higher order cognition to achieve inhibition of unpleasant sensations. Alternatively post-modern techniques, as with ancient methods, are advocating for a bottom-up approach, working from the sensorimotor impulses as they progress through the body as physical sensations, including intrusive sounds, smells and pain or numbing (Ogden & Minton, 2000; van der Kolk, 2001). Holistic treatment modalities and embodied learning techniques incorporating all senses can be achieved through experiential and activity-based learning practices.

*Mindsight*, as described by Siegel (2011), is the practice of focusing our attention that can bring integration to the cognitive extremes and help to expand identities and liberate the mind's natural drive to heal and grow. Siegel (2011) explored the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 4th Edition* (DSM-IV) and identified that all mental illness could be described by either cognitive chaos or

rigidity. Bringing to conscious awareness that which has been buried in implicit memory and dysfunctional mental models to an exposed and clear, explicit view frees us to live fully in the present, making conscious choices about our behaviour and responses. Transformational learning is aimed at removing the conflicts and clutter in the mind that creates disharmony and inhibits clear perceptions and actions (Nelson, 2009). This is very close to the definition of *Mindsight*, the theory of personal transformation explained by Siegel (2011).

Failure to achieve this transformation can lead to alcoholism, depression, and even suicide as has been seen with many veterans of recent wars. This discussion is relevant to the story of healing from addiction and criminal lifestyle which has often been described by prisoners as living in the war zone, soldiers of the gangs delivering and witnessing the horrors of the violence perpetrated on straying gang members, or customers who cannot pay their debts. Returning to the community, for many who have been incarcerated in yet another war zone, feels like returning to a strange land; where familiarity is found mainly in the negative judgments and constant attention to past identities and failures; exclusion is the language spoken most often.

Maruna (2011) discusses the possibility of reentry as a rite of passage. The court proceedings, sentencing, and steps to incarceration are elaborate and dramatic rituals serving the distinct process of de-individuation and institutionalization. This public ritual is designed as much to restore a sense of social order to the wider community as it is to maintain control over a person. It can also be argued that imprisonment itself is a desired rite of passage for perhaps a disadvantaged young person for whom it may be cool to do time in the *Big House*.

Reentry to the community has no such ceremony to counteract these degradation effects and celebrate a crucial life transition such as reintegration, offering the hope or possibility of redemption and reconciliation. Maruna (2011) offers evidence of the failing of society to re-accept returning individuals in the numbers of prisoners returning to prison and the high rates of suicide among recently released ex-prisoners in the US, Australia, and the UK. If reintegration and re-entry are to be meaningful terms he questions the necessity for them to have greater meaning than the simple physical resettlement. Rites of passage give meaning to personal biographies, shaping identity and self-narrative; they create rather than express mental states.

**Ojibway healing practices.**

Exclusion can be alleviated and inclusion celebrated through experiential and or ceremonial events. For centuries, Aboriginal societies have welcomed home their warriors to assist in the transition from soldier to civilian for post-war readjustment after the horrors of violence. While different in specifics across tribes, American Indian people have developed ceremonial events for their warriors that according to Wilson (1989) are,

complex social psychological and religious processes to reinstate warriors within the matrix of society...[T]hese rituals have a common purpose of building inner strength and reaffirming individual identity and a sense of connectedness and continuity with a meaningful community. (p. 41)

Between the mid-1950s and the late 1960s during an era of global decolonization there was a significant revival of North American Indian ceremonialism as Aboriginal people returned to their own heritage. They view illness recovery not simply as repair

but as potential for becoming a better person (Jilek, 1986). According to the research of Adelson and Lepinsky, (in Waldram , 2008),

Healing is an active, not passive, process: it is something you do, not something you think or that is done to you. In this sense, healing is work, it is ongoing and requires dedication. First and foremost, it requires commitment from the individual. No one can heal you or make you heal. Personal agency is stressed above all else. (p. 6)

The Anishinaabe (Ojibway) theory of illness is that it is about “soul-loss” (Grim, 1983, p. 59). The closest term to healing is “*mnaamodzawin*,” meaning a good and holistic way of life and that health is linked to culture, land and community (Manitowabi & Shawande, 2011). There is also an appreciation of the lasting effects of childhood impressions in later life. Prior to puberty a male child in a traditional clan will be led to an isolated place to fast and obtain a “manitou dream or vision” (p. 63). This vision fast allows for the initial contact with the surrounding spirit power, a way of finding soul; it is especially valued and will be deepened throughout life as an intimacy with community and the natural environment grows (Baldwin, 1957). When this ceremonial and celebrated connection to spirit is lost or avoided there is a break in the developmental process incorporating spirituality while moving into youth and young adulthood. Spirit is known by the Ojibway as manitou, everything has its own manitou, from rocks to plants and humans.

The *nanandawi* (curer) shaman is the tribal doctor and cures his patients by evoking his own manitou patron to locate the cause of illness. Herbal prescriptions and other techniques can be used but the main skill is in talking with the spirits. The *wabeno* (fire manipulator) shaman uses fire to interpret dreams and guide novices through

connecting with spirit, often mediating with the power in a trance state. The *meda* (family healer) shaman is responsible for naming and herbal healing.

The word *midewiwin* comes from *mide* meaning “sound of the drum” and *wiwin* meaning “doings” and refers to the Ojibway shamanic society also called the Grand Medicine Society. The *Midewiwin* ceremony celebrated in spring or early summer is both a healing ritual and can be an initiation rite into a shamanic vocation. The tradition is considered sacred and secret due to its origin among the manitou. Other ceremonies led by *Midewiwins* are for the dead although mainly the Mide Society addresses the blessing of life at birth and the curing of disease and maintenance of ancient knowledge of healing it is not about worshiping anything or anyone. “This tribal milieu recognizes the force of life in nature as potential sources for personal power” (Grim, 1983, p. 72). An interesting note is that the *Midewiwin* also provide a transindividual, transclan vision focusing on the primordial ancestors common to all Proto-Ojibway bands; this was not a vision of the future but of the heritage, grounding the people in their traditional connections recognizing “*all my relations*” and valuing the ancient wisdom (Manitowabi & Shawande, 2011).

Ceremonies such as the sweat lodge and the shaking tent rite are opportunities for the Elder or Shaman to connect to the ancestors and the spirits: to manitou. These ceremonies, although different, both offer safe places for people to release emotional pain and seek healing for all manner of illness. There is also a community and social gathering aspect valuable to the solidarity of a clan or group and enabling a reassertion of the values and ethics of the community. Prayers are offered in the sweat lodge and participants are able to release guilty feelings (Baldwin, 1957; Grim, 1983; Wilson

1989). The sweat lodge is used to restore good health, reduce pain, and bring spiritual balance by offering purification (Kelm, 1998; Wilson, 1989). A significant and valuable message is that no one walks alone in these close-knit communities.

According to Whipple Warren (1885), a man of Ojibway and English descent, the Ojibway belief is of their own first existence:

I can give nothing more appropriate than a minute analysis of the name which they have given to their race—An-ish-in-aub-ag. This expressive word is derived from An-ish-aw, meaning without cause, or “spontaneous,” and in-aub-a-we-se, meaning the “human body.” The word An-ish-in-aub-ag, therefore, literally translated, signifies “spontaneous man.” (p. 56)

Although Warren uses Ojibway, this paper will use Ojibway as this was the spelling on the sign as I entered the White Sands Reserve to conduct my first interviews with family members.

One aspect of Ojibway people noted by Baldwin (1957) and of interest to exploring trauma healing is his description of their personality. “The Ojibway personality ... functions largely in terms of internal rather than external control. The personality structure is highly introverted. The individual bears full responsibility for obeying the social norms and disobedience is punished by sickness” (p. 53). As previously mentioned, Grim (1983) connects illness with soul and here, Baldwin makes the connection to negative behaviours; in either case it suggests that illness originates internally rather than from the environment and the individual must be an active and responsible participant in his or her healing with the assistance of an Elder or Shaman. “Healing, then, is ultimately about hope for the individual, the family, the community, and the future” (Waldram, 2008, p. 6).

### **Comparison of Old and New**

There are many similarities of the understanding of human development, healing, and behavior from the ancient sciences with those emerging from neurobiological and neuropsychological research. From brain mapping, and imaging, bio-chemical tests and so forth to the relational and holistic approach of Indigenous wisdom there is opportunity for collaboration in creating a sustainable, inclusive, and holistically healthy future for humankind. Four Arrows (2012, ¶, 5) believes “indigenous wisdom embraces a holistic subjectivity that honors authentic reflection on lived experience and relationships with others.”

According to Macy (1991), Buddhist theory is based on understanding the “radical interdependence of all phenomena” (p. xii). It is an ancient systems-informed science of the human condition and experience developing over the lifespan. Four Arrows et al. (2010) and Wilson (1989) believe we must bring the two scientific approaches together, especially in this revolutionary time in neuroscience; if we do not ground the new knowledge with the ancient organic we may be led further away from, “the truth about what humans can do to live in harmony on this planet” (Four Arrows et al., 2010, p. vii).

The “Royal Society” was founded in 1660 to “discuss the new philosophy of promoting knowledge of the natural world through observation and experiment, which we now call science” (<http://royalsociety.org/about-us/history/?from=welcome>; ¶. 1). Prior to the new science and common to the organismic philosophies of the Renaissance was a belief that all parts of the cosmos are connected and interrelated by living in unity (Shiva, 1998). The organismic belief systems so similar to Indigenous



ways were veiled in the West through Bacon, Newtonian physics, Darwin's theory of evolution, and Descartes' error; the separation of mind from body and science from spirituality and religion.

The sociology of scientific knowledge, however, has exposed that western science does not differ significantly in its foundations and depends on a variety of devices and strategies to move and engage with local knowledge, such as social, technical, and literary. There is similarity in the use of empirical observation and the maintenance of data sets. The difference lays in the concepts of cause and effect that everything is in relation to something else and most significantly the removal of the spiritual realm from western science (Johnson & Murton, 2007). As noted earlier existentialism is also spanning this gap by inquiring into the complex interaction of all these systems of physiology, psychology, spirituality, hope, and free choice.

Today, Jacobs (2004) states that science is admired, perhaps almost worshiped, in North America, for the lengthening of our lifespan and the lightening of our workload. Goldin Rosenberg (2000) states that, "[m]odern medicine is dominated by the biomedical model, which has acquired the status of dogma" (p. 141). It has also uncovered mysteries from our oceans to our solar system. Pharmacology has produced thousands of medicines to solve our illness, reduce our pain, and stave off premature death. However, according to Mehl-Madrona (2007), conventional medicine has lost the art of healing in its desire for technological solutions and in separating itself from culture and tradition. "Modern reductionist science, ... turns out to be a patriarchal project which has excluded women as experts and simultaneously excluded ecological

and holistic ways of knowing that understand, and respect, nature's processes and interconnectedness as science" (Shiva, 1998, p. 162).

Sampson (2000) describes alternative medicine as pseudoscientific, sometimes absurd; he describes it as a "system of relativity of truth, of fact, and of existence itself ... The system is called postmodernism" (p. 18). He describes it as an assault on scientific method, and gullibility is an indicator of the postmodern disorder. From the other point of view, McGuire (2010) believes that the "power of Western science is its ability to depict its findings as universal including the ability to determine what is not legitimate knowledge, and to advance what is considered legitimate" (p. 125). Jacobs (2004) also contends that there is mistrust by those whose political, religious, and ethical beliefs and worldviews are challenged by new discoveries. For some, she says, there is also a diminishing ability for enchantment or to believe in miracles and magic leading perhaps to a loss of hope. The question is, what is legitimate knowledge, who decides, and which is the alternative medicine?

One example of how modern research differs from Indigenous practices is that some psychology research is accomplished in the laboratories with artificially created scenarios. There is good reason for this approach, as variables may be controlled and the safety of the participants monitored by ethics review boards and the like. Seigel (1999), however, also notes that observation of experience in the role of human development has led to some devastating errors in the past. One example he cites was the accusation that mothers of autistic children were cold and said to be "refrigerators" (p. xi).

As an example of a lack in inclusion in psychology experiments Four Arrows et al. (2010) explain that some research projects presume a strong sense of ownership as a criterion, and while this may be true for western cultures, it is not true for traditional Indigenous peoples. Communal ownership and collective approaches are the norm in Aboriginal clans, explaining the absence of interdependence as the focus for restoring and healing functioning. It is this globalizing of results which has caused distress for those excluded from asking the questions.

Salladay (2000) believes that the postmodern worldview radically alters the understanding of healthcare, healing, and personhood. “No longer is the physician the healer, nor the nurse his handmaiden. Instead, the healer is the Self—the Divine within” (p. 39). She says that healthcare consumers are no longer satisfied with the impersonal treatment that views the body as a mechanical object; they want care for the whole person. O’Mathúna (2000) believes that while science can dehumanize through impersonal interactions, this is not necessarily inevitable and sensitivity should be part of health care education.

There is hope for inclusion when Monastersky (2006) speaks of all the non-scientific words that can be heard in the halls of neurobiology departments. He lists the Dalai Lama, Franciscan nuns, the soul and happiness; but he makes no reference to anything remotely Native American or Canadian First Nations. Investigators are studying the brain and spirituality; some as though it is an object to be reduced and exposed by imaging, others are questioning whether or not the mind exists beyond the body, and some are boldly opening up their labs and their theories to spirituality. Native Americans, however, have continued throughout their oral history to discuss

the metaphysical world and spirituality as inseparable aspects of health and healing (Johnson & Murton, 2007).

Quantum physics is also an interesting area to explore. It has sought to find the smallest subatomic particles of matter in the universe; it is the place where the physical world of Newton is left for the invisible world of Einstein. The movement of this energy/matter is particle like and wave like and random, physical atoms are made up of vortices of energy constantly spinning and vibrating and inexplicably influenced by the observer (Lipton, 2005). A notion not dissimilar to Native American science which also discusses the world as being in constant motion and flux, existence consisting of energy waves, interrelationships and everything being animate. What appears as material objects are simply the manifestation of unique combinations of energy waves, but not all energy waves will necessarily manifest in material objects (Cajete, 2000). According to Lipton (2005) this is the interface with alternative therapies, all based on the belief that “energy fields are influential in controlling our physiology and our health” (p. 99).

### **Summary**

Salladay (2000) believes that nurses and patients alike are quite often unaware of their worldview or that which underlies alternative therapies and other ways of knowing. William James, back in the late 1800s, held a worldview calling for a psychological science inclusive of philosophy. The relevance to this study particularly lies in the philosophy of the medical model approach to addiction: Once an addict always, always an addict, who must recognize that they are powerless over their alcoholism or addiction. As the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous says “once he

takes any alcohol whatever in to his system something happens, both in the bodily and the mental sense that makes it virtually impossible for him to stop” (p. 22-23).

[http://www.aa.org/pages/en\\_US/alcoholics-anonymous](http://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/alcoholics-anonymous). Contrary to this opinion, Hansen and Charlton's (2013) “fundamental assumption, is that individuals and communities can be healed of addictions and destructive behaviours” (p. 8). They are careful to acknowledge the difficulty in the change process but believe there is danger in the notion of there being no free will or “no control over, which the medical model so effortlessly allows” (p. 12). Too many women have shared their story of deciding they are *done* for there not to be some truth. This quote is from Lora's partner about the day he hit the *done button* in 2009:

April 23<sup>rd</sup>, I got up out of the park. I said I'm done. I left all my gear there. I says you know what God? Now's the time. I'm going to do [one of] two things today. I'm going to go back to the pen, because I'm not scared of the pen, [or] I'm going to go back into recovery. And I said a silent prayer and I walked out.

He went through 10 days of what he described as a living hell:

I thought about both of them [Lora and Stewart junior] every day.... I laid down... I went to my bed and I laid down and I cried, and I cried, because I knew I was done. And I was sick. And they let me sleep for the, for 4 days they let me sleep.

Although there were occasions Lora overused her pain medication to control her emotional aching she was always fearful, in her words, “of becoming an addict again.” As the cancer spread and her medication had to be increased she also maintained her duties as mother and only days before her death she walked out to the ambulance when she and her partner knew her time had arrived. She became dependent but not re-addicted, and there is a significant difference.

This quote from *A General Theory of Love* by Lewis, Amini and Lannon (2000) brings together so beautifully my questions about our western approaches to the healing of those hurt and hurting:

Science is an inherent contradiction — systematic wonder — applied to the natural world. In its mundane form, the methodical instinct prevails and the result, an orderly procession of papers, advances the perimeter of knowledge, step by laborious step. Great scientific minds partake of that daily discipline and can also suspend it, yielding to the sheer love of allowing the mental engine to spin free. And then Einstein imagines himself riding a light beam, Kekule formulates the structure of benzene in a dream, and Fleming's eye travels past the annoying mold on his glassware to the clear ring surrounding it — a lucid halo in a dish otherwise opaque with bacteria — and penicillin is born. Who knows how many scientific revolutions have been missed because their potential inaugurators disregarded the whimsical, the incidental, the inconvenient inside the laboratory? (p. 81)

Here is the interface of thinking and feeling, intuition and concrete methodical, rationally driven exploration in hard science. To understand the what, how, and why but never quite letting go of the instinctive, intuitive way of knowing, the felt understanding that sometimes defies the accepted wisdom of science; the magic and sometimes the only hope.

The question is how to unite these two worlds toward a future of collaborative inclusive science? Perhaps one answer lies in the question posed by Sheldrake (2012); should science be a belief system or a method of inquiry? The answer might actually be both and if so they need to be inclusive and holistic. “When the White Brother's inventive genius comes together with the Red Brother's deep wisdom, we will develop an appropriate technology that does not violate the Earth, but restores it and permits all creatures to live in health” (Four Arrows et al., 2010, p. xv).

*Ultimately as we heal the past we also heal the future.*

**Mental****Cognitive domain.*****Kinomaage: Ojibway word for education.***

The closest translation from Ojibway to English for *Kinomaage* is the earth shows us the way (<http://learningfromtheearth.org/kinomaage/>) and is used to discuss education. The methods of teaching children are participation and example during everyday life of doing chores, playing, and socializing (<http://www.sas.upenn.edu/dpic/Drum/Welcome/Culture/Women>). According to the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (<http://www.nan.on.ca/>), all members of the clan, community, or extended family have an important role in preparing the child to find and develop their personal gift or talent and their place in the community to benefit everyone's welfare. Learning is lifelong and holistic. Primarily the mother takes on the role of teacher by sharing the deep respect for the animals and the earth; nothing should be wasted because life is built on reciprocity and when the animals go hungry so does man (<http://rschools.nan.on.ca/article/lessons-2002-6.asp>).

Education included cultural and spiritual beliefs, often taught through storytelling, while learning the importance of kinship and that group rights are more important than individual rights (Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples, 1996). Henry Rowe Schoolcraft was married to a woman of Ojibway, also called Chippewa, and European descent. Chippewa is the official name used in the United States treaties (<http://www.indigenouspeople.net/chippewa.htm>). He observed on July 31, 1822, in Chapter XI of *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes on the American Frontiers*, that the mythology and fictitious tales and legends were

the means of communicating, including moral and mechanical knowledge and modes of thinking and reasoning. This important recognition had been completely missed in prior contact:

Indian Mythology.--Nothing has surprised me more in the conversations which I have had with persons acquainted with the Indian customs and character, than to find that the Chippewas amuse themselves with oral tales of a mythological or allegorical character. Some of these tales, which I have heard, are quite fanciful, and the wildest of them are very characteristic of their notions and customs. They often take the form of allegory, and in this shape appear designed to teach some truth or illustrate some maxim. The fact, indeed, of such a fund of fictitious legendary matter is quite a discovery, and speaks more for the intellect of the race than any trait I have heard. Who would have imagined that these wandering foresters should have possessed such a resource? What have all the voyagers and remarkers from the days of Cabot and Raleigh been about, not to have discovered this curious trait, which lifts up indeed a curtain, as it were, upon the Indian mind, and exhibits it in an entirely new character?

(<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/11119/11119.txt>)

This is one example of how underestimated and misunderstood were the traditions of Aboriginal transformative oral learning opportunities, available only to those really listening.

***Transformational change and learning: multiple perspectives.***

While the development in Lora was significant and she appeared to achieve transformation through learning (TL), there are aspects of this theory that do not quite or completely describe her process. Transformational or transformative learning can happen in an instant or over time. For Lora the later was certainly truer, although a definite shift occurred to start the process when she was moved to the custodial setting in British Columbia. She accepted that there could be hope for a different future when offered opportunity and possibility by the warden.



Mezirow was perhaps the primary architect of transformational learning (Merriam & Cafarella, 1999; Taylor, 2008), developing a theory of transformation that fits Maruna's (2001) definition. Maturity is a malleable personality attribute or frame of mind and both agree that having a life narrative that makes sense is important to transformation. Mezirow (1997) opens his paper noting that "a defining condition of being human is that we must understand the meaning of our experience" (p. 5).

We learn by using prior frames of reference, symbolic models, and interpretations that we have acquired through culture, and parents, or other care givers to make meaning of experiences and plan for future actions (Nelson, 2009). Intentional or incidental learning is the result of deliberate inquiry or the byproduct of events and experiences of life and may be both or either consciously or unconsciously assimilated (Mezirow, 2000).

It is important that adult learning emphasizes contextual understanding, critical reflection on assumptions, and validates meaning by assessing reasons. Justification for much of what we know and believe, our values, and our feelings mostly "depend on the context—biographical, historical, cultural—in which they are embedded" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 3). When considering the application of transformational learning theory to the growth and development of an Ojibway woman we must contextualize it with the colonial and residential school history. Freire (2007) has this to say about learning in oppressive cultures:

Self-depreciation is another characteristic of the oppressed, which derives from their internalization of the opinion the oppressors hold of them. So often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything—that they are sick, lazy, and unproductive—that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness. (p.63)

A report on the effectiveness of six adult learning centres in Manitoba recognized the importance of working to change such negative self-defeating belief systems within many of their interviewees. They found that remarkable personal transformations were occurring (Silver, Klyne, & Simard, 2003). The most significant factors contributing to this success included the holistic and learner-centred approach to instruction. Building a strong social and emotional bond is vital with practical supports in a warm, personalized and non-hierarchical, friendly, and nonjudgmental atmosphere.

We make meaning with different dimensions of awareness and understanding and through experiential, spiritual, and emotional shifts. This holistic approach to learning has its roots in both the circle story teachings of Aboriginal Elders, the earth as teacher, and the theorists such as Rogers' (1961) humanistic psychology, the person-centred approach. It also fits with adult learning principles (androgogy) and self-directed learning methods described by Knowles (1990).

Rogers (1961) believed and discussed at length that at its core, the human personality is positive, socially oriented, rational, and realistic. At the time of his writing this was not supported by many other researchers. His point of view would have been contested by Freud who argued that man is driven by the id, his basic instinct for survival and control which, if unchecked, would result in hedonistic pathological gratification (Berger, 1983). This debate is deeply rooted in the widely differing opinions and therefore approaches concerning rehabilitation potential of prisoners.

A correctional setting by the nature of the title should believe in the possibility for positive personality foundations, congruent with a focus on learning that can nurture change. It happens through “participation in constructive discourse...to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those we have uncritically assimilated from others” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 8). Autonomous thinking can be emotionally intense as people become aware of their underlying assumptions that are no longer useful and begin creating dissonance which may spark the change.

There is debate about the dissonance and whether or not it is from a single event or many. Newman (2012) is challenging the entire concept of a specific form of learning as being transformative and believes that transformation does not occur due to a single disorienting dilemma and the subsequent and related learning, but that multiple events over time culminate in what may appear to be a transformational moment. He believes that all learning is transformational and so the term should simply be *good learning*.

Gamlin (2003) states that although an experience or event may be foundational to transformation there must also be an active and critical engagement with it which does not occur in a vacuum: Freire (2007) refers to this as praxis. MacKeracher (2004) points out that at any time a learner can choose to retreat from possible changes and stay within the models of familiar reality. Possibly all of these opinions are true. A myriad of events and triggers may well accumulate towards a *tipping point* at which time, dissonance becomes intolerable and transformation may occur. *And* we have the free will to decide to live with dissonance, in disequilibrium, and untransformed for a long time or even forever. Stevens (2012) refers to the necessity of a hook or catalyst to match a person's openness and desire to change. Here is the dilemma of the *done*

*button*: What can we learn about the critical point of making this choice and what can trigger the tipping point?

Herrschaft et al. (2009) studied the unique steps taken by women moving towards role transformation. Their findings show that women begin with a shift in their perceived identities; if this is reinforced positively by social supports, particularly family, they will attempt to maintain that new identity. This change may or may not lead to fixing the deficits in their lives such as lack of employment or housing but this is not the essential piece of the transformation process for women; relational support is. However Giddens (1991) states that a person's identity is not simply a matter of his or her behaviour nor is it based in the reactions of others. Identity is based within the capacity of the individual to sustain a sequential, integrated, and purposive self-narrative (Stevens, 2012).

The main significance of both approaches is that identity can be re-conceptualized from a core self or trait-based notion to an active developmental process a fluid, and fragile symbolic project of the self. There is considerable empirical research suggesting that changes to personal identity and self-narrative lead to a new and improved self, no longer able to cognitively and emotionally cohere with offending behaviour (Stevens, 2012). Again there is a point of choice, the nuances of which are still not clearly understood.

Another theoretical underpinning of transformation is Piaget's theory of learning that individuals, when trying to calm dissonance and achieve equilibrium, will accommodate and or assimilate new knowledge or influences from their environment (Berger, 1983). Through accommodation a person may break down and re-establish

structures of knowledge or modes of understanding resulting in transformed meaning or new cognitive strategies. Through assimilation a person may absorb existing structures into the new understanding, without necessarily changing the essential meanings, therefore remaining bound to prior mental models. As an example for the criminal justice system the threshold for dissonance is when the new understandings might be linked to what now appear to be anti-social and unacceptable schemas from the new standpoint (Illeris, 2007).

Individuals who grow up in families rife with violence and invested in a criminal culture live by a code that is antisocial and detrimental to their healthy growth and development in all domains, most particularly the social and emotional domains. These families may develop rules and hidden stories that can sustain these pathological schemas and almost certainly the family members will have experienced some form of trauma. Encouraging autonomous thinking toward becoming more liberated and socially responsible is fundamental to the prisoners healing and integration into society (Mezirow, 2000). This is important not only for the prisoners of today but also their children of tomorrow (Hanson & Carver, 2004).

The three domains of learning through which this may occur are instrumental, communicative, and emancipatory:

**Instrumental:** learning that teaches us to control and manipulate the environment, to understand cause and effect for strategic action. This also includes organizing other people and task-oriented problem solving.

**Communicative:** considered the most significant learning in adulthood it is about understanding and communicating with others to share our feelings and thoughts and

correctly interpret theirs. We must learn to describe and explain our intentions, values, ideals, and moral issues; we should be able to do so in social and philosophical, political and psychological concepts. Communicative learning is shaped by culture and linguistic codes, through social norms and expectations, which are enforced by sanctions.

Emancipatory: this learning domain is about empowering marginalized individuals and or communities to seek understanding of their culture and how it has been submerged, hidden from their own view and that of the larger community (Freire, 2007). Emancipatory learning is particularly relevant when working with Aboriginal people in prison. Identifying and challenging distorted meaning perspectives through critical reflection that have contributed to dependence on outside forces.

Emancipation is found in curiosity and questioning, not through indoctrination (Mezirow, 1991).

Gamlin (2003) discusses similar factors in presenting transformation as integral to his understanding of Aboriginal literacy in its broadest context: he says that "Aboriginal literacy is transformative" (p. 16). The relevant concepts are of forming and understanding a unique and holistic cultural perspective, being literate of worldview and what is necessary to survive and sustain a distinct and vital culture. Creativity leads to this intrinsic aspect of survival: re-symbolizing, reinterpreting, building new thinking and new behavior coming from our openness to listening, reflecting, and practicing while giving voice to changing perspectives. Culture does not stand still; it evolves and develops through challenges and interactions, people, and events. This healthy cultural evolution for Aboriginal people will happen when

education itself is transformed to include traditional values and attitudes while sharing legends (*aansookaanaan*), narratives (*dbaajmowinan*), and language (*Nishnaabemwin*) so it will also be true when all prison programs are deeply informed by these traditional ways of knowing and learning (Corbiere, 2000; Gamlin, 2003). Literacy then will be the place for individuals to regain and restructure their concepts of self and identification with their roots.

Mezirow (1991, 2000, 2003) described three types of reflection on experiences with only one he believes actually being involved in the transformation. The three are content reflection of the actual experience, process reflection about how to handle the situation, and the one potentially most significantly related to transformation is premise reflection. Premise reflection involves the examination of long held socially constructed assumptions, beliefs, and values relating to an experience.

Involved also are habits of mind which are simply how we know what we know and why we value what we value. They may be transformed with conscious effort, reflecting on and modifying strategies, processes, and values underlying our meaning. Transforming points of view and meaning perspectives is the general framework of meaning making and cultural understanding underlying our entire model of reality. They may be transformed by deeply critical reflection on our underlying assumptions, premises, and habits of mind.

Gunnlaugson (2005), in applying an integrally informed lens to transformational learning, also recognizes that as an individual begins to develop, a new concept of order or dimension of consciousness is born. The "self-structure undergoes a gradual or dramatic reconstruction into a more inclusive and complex structure for organizing

one's experience" (p. 341). He continues to point out that the previous stage or stages of one's self-development do not disappear but become enveloped and included in the ever increasing complex order of consciousness: thus containing new capacities and potentials for more inclusive worldviews, sets of values, and scopes of identification.

An important aspect of this increasing ability is to be able to tolerate dialectics: to hold together seemingly oppositional points of view, notions, and "pluralistic contexts of meaning making" (Gunnlaugson, 2005, p. 345). It is important to be able to achieve this without the need to devalue, marginalize, or reject the *other*. An element of this ability and maturity seems potentially connected to emotional safety in that while the rational brain may learn and confirm the necessity of holding dialectics, the emotional self may find this difficult to contain if the identity is not sufficiently secure.

Here is the list of the 11 phases of transformational learning developed and described by Mezirow (2000) over the last three decades:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. A self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
3. A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning of a course of action
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships



10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's perspective
11. Altering present relationships and forging new relationships (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22).

These phases, although not necessarily linear or particularly sequential form a stream that becomes holistic learning fitting with both Knowles' early work and Rogers' (1961) theories of learning. Teaching or facilitating must include experiential, emotional, and spiritual components to shift the cognitive schema in perceiving reality, as with Aboriginal teaching strategies (Nelson, 2009). This approach will create the opportunity for cognitive development that is characterized by fellowship through tolerance, sensitivity, reciprocity, and empathy for perceiving the reality of others.

Kegan (1982) describes the setting necessary for transformation to occur based on the notion of holding environments described by Winnicott, a prominent pediatrician and child psychoanalyst who wrote extensively about attachment issues of infant and mother bonding. Winnicott (1960) discusses *holding* used here to "denote not only the actual physical holding of the infant, but also the total environmental provision ... In other words, it refers to a three-dimensional or space relationship" (p. 589). Kegan states that "we are held throughout our lives in qualitatively different ways as we evolve" (pp. 256-257). I believe this is relevant to the work of holding a safe space, holding hope, and holding out a hand that is the necessary support for transformation to be risked.

A correctional system, by its mandate, is expected to achieve some form of correction or transformation of individuals from criminal towards pro-social citizen.

Achievement of this requires a number of factors to be available and in place, including a community open to receiving and supporting a citizen who has radically re-evaluated his or her concepts of cultural norms. In doing so such individuals commit what Brookfield (1987) describes as cultural suicide, or the “sensation of a total collapse of their world” (Freire, 2007, p. 35). It can be described as being ostracized by friends and perhaps family and feeling totally alone after re-evaluating life and changing to a pro-social journey. Maruna and Roy (2007) use the expression of “knifing off” to describe this same notion of wiping out the old self and starting over. Although originating in the social sciences it has become commonly used in contemporary criminology when discussing *desistance* from crime. In rejecting what was known they *must* be welcomed into what is new. It is vital that during incarceration there is connection to community members ready and willing to hold and support growth inside the prison and afterwards in the community, bearing witness to growth and a new narrative.

*Narrative learning.*

Humans tell stories as a way to make meaning of life, to construct their identities and share the roles they consider most salient (Clark & Rossiter, 2008; Herrschaft et al., 2009). Stories are the vehicle to arouse our imagination and interest, bringing the past, the present, and the future into a current dimension. They are dynamic and facilitate a broad overview of the connections of each time frame. While roles may simply be identified initially as mother, prisoner, or friend, a story will often follow to elaborate and provide context, clues to emotions, worldviews, and values. There may be several narratives within one story; identifying the dominant or recurrent narrative

has potential for very *good learning*, for participatory change, and in the process making sense of personal experiences and environments (Nelson, McClintock, Perez-Ferguson, Nash, & Thompson, 2008).

Siegel (2011) also discusses narrative in recognizing the need to make sense of our lives using our autobiographical memory in an integrative manner, allowing a coherent history to emerge. Constructing a narrative can help us deal with an experience, described from the inside rather than observed; or to create a counter narrative, for example the opportunity to grow through an illness rather than be a victim of it. In relation to transformation *re-storying* our lives is a way of reconceptualizing our identity or values that no longer fit. The construction of our personal story is, however, constantly influenced by the dominant cultural narrative, and the media, social, religious, and historical narratives that bombard us each day. In this way narrative learning is categorized under constructivist theory recognizing that learning comes from experience, linking it also to experiential learning theory “shaping what and how people develop their distinctive ways of knowing” (Merriam & Cafarella, 1999, p. 160).

Maruna (2001) believes that “to desist from crime, ex-offenders need to develop a coherent, pro-social identity for themselves” and cites Singer who found that:

What is missing from the identities of men suffering from chronic addiction is a belief that their lives are embedded in the same world and reality to which the rest of us belong...[We] have stories that, despite unhappiness or tragedy, make sense. [Those] chronically addicted...continue to feel [the] otherness about the apparent illogic of their stories. (2001, p. 7)

Creating a dynamic and coherent narrative of a life story can override the historical frames and worldviews of the conscious mind and transcend the self-limiting vision of

the future. Coherence is always a work in progress, helping to manage constant change and the contradictions of daily life (Clark & Rossiter, 2008). There is opportunity to influence positively, the creation of a new narrative.

Autobiographical narratives are written backwards in review, and for this reason are such powerful tools to help understand and interpret the past and make sense of the present reality while conceptualizing and projecting future possibilities (Brooks & Clark, 2001; Kenemore & Roldan, 2006). According to Herrschaft et al. (2009) this process can be seen as a four-stage model with strong ties to the process of TL:

- ✓ experiencing first doubts
- ✓ searching for alternative roles
- ✓ experiencing a turning point that triggers role exit
- ✓ creating a new identity of being an “ex” or former member of the role.

Narratives, drawings, stories, paintings, poems, and songs are universal forms of expression and involve the whole brain to develop and describe. They cross national, tribal, religious, and cultural boundaries, spanning the history of mankind most likely since language emerged and petroglyphs and pictographs were first created. Being both or either the teller and the receiver are valuable learning positions within the immediate relationship.

Transformational learning that promotes lasting change is built on the development of new language skills. A language that transforms existing mental models and social arrangements is one that will help override our resistance or immunity to change (Kegan & Lahey, 2001). All systems maintain equilibrium dynamically and so are

vulnerable to returning to status quo after superficial change has occurred, however sharing and re-telling the new narrative can help to maintain and build a new normal.

Women will very quickly start to use the label of *offender* in discussions about themselves. This is concerning as there is a continuous or future orientation to this noun; this person may have committed an offence but will he or she always be an offender? Stevens (2012) discusses the label of ex-offender as being a person only understood in relation to past criminality and forever defined by it. Throughout this paper the word *prisoner* is preferred as it reflects a statement of situational fact rather than a designation. Redirecting and reminding prisoners to the other more positive descriptors they can use for themselves is a way of resisting the acceptance of this label. Using a new vocabulary can reinforce and solidify the change broadly and beyond just the problem being *fixed*. If we focus solely on addressing or fixing the symptoms of problems, we may inadvertently preserve and strengthen the errors in the system that can perpetuate them.

*Feminist pedagogy and transformational learning.*

Lora was a woman and from a devalued culture; she was seen only as an addict, prisoner, and violent. As she grew towards mother, partner, volunteer, and social change agent she continued to experience the many layers of discrimination and contradiction faced by women to this day. Briskin (1994), discusses three sets of contradictions facing women learners: namely, the messages women carry in life and bring to the classroom, the contradictions women face as educators, and the contradictions women experience as activists and change makers. She says that “[a] powerful contradictory message for women is the devaluation of mothering ... and the

simultaneous presentation of motherhood as a woman's lifework ... the definition of a successful woman" (p. 2). These issues are exacerbated in female prisoners, especially if they have worked in the sex trade. They are often separated from their children by the justice system for non-violent crimes while supporting their children in poverty, and then are seen by others and by themselves as bad mothers for the judicially enforced abandonment. These women are the fastest growing population in Canadian prisons.

Young women are encouraged by the media to be soft and sensitive in order to attract a male but this makes them more vulnerable to abuse. The hidden contradiction of male as protector and also violator is often missed by young and impressionable women, leading to codependent and dysfunctional relationships. Intersectionality describing the simultaneous meaning and consequences of identities, difference, and disadvantage helps us to understand the complexity of these and many other messages and stereotypes (Cole, 2009) culminating powerfully in the disempowered women in our prison systems.

Belenky and Stanton (2000) add a criticism of transformational learning (TL) from a feminist point of view in that TL presumes relations of equality among participants of reflective discourse. Most human relations are not equal and most particularly those involving marginalized women who may be inhibited and immature in their learning development. However they believe that with sensitivity in the environment these women can participate, contribute, and will benefit from reflective dialogue.

Every one of these contradictions, ideologies, stereotypes, and messages must be identified and illuminated for women whose self-image is deplorable to even begin to

see the possibility of liberating themselves from this social and cultural oppression. If the woman happens to be Aboriginal the disempowerment is magnified.

*Empowerment.*

Empowerment is the first of five guiding principles outlined in Chapter 10 of *Creating Choices: The Report of The Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women* (CSC, 1990) that inform the work of the Women Offender Sector of the Correctional Service of Canada: These guiding principles are

- ✓ Empowerment
- ✓ Meaningful and Responsible Choices
- ✓ Respect and Dignity
- ✓ Supportive Environment
- ✓ Shared Responsibility

The first principle is specifically related to this dissertation due to the connection between disempowerment and violence perhaps grounded in the perceived loss of control over another person or over life conditions (CSC, 1990). Conversely, increased self-esteem promotes the ability to accept and express responsibility for actions taken and future choices thus building strength and creating a constructive cycle of empowerment. A danger lies in making the women solely responsible for their circumstances without recognizing the contributing factors. Especially important to this research is the discussion of Aboriginal women, empowerment, and the ability to determine their role as women and mothers (CSC, 1990).

Elders and others told the Federal Task Force that wrote *Creating Choices* that to enhance identity and self-esteem among Aboriginal women, programs are needed that

will increase access to traditional teachings, as well as counseling from Elders, enabling women to express their spirituality (CSC, 1990). However according to Warner (1998) there is a potential problem between the emphasis on choice and empowerment which is fundamental to these women establishing hope, confidence, and self-determination. The issue arises when behavioural programs and security interventions conflict with personal empowerment when required to manage the institutional setting.

It is also questionable whether or not people or communities can be empowered by outside influences or if it is an entirely internal self-driven process. Empowerment is a multi-construct concept about both processes and outcomes, for individuals and for communities drawing upon various disciplinary perspectives and understandings, and used differently around the world. Empowerment can be described as a multi-dimensional social process with its origins in liberatory pedagogy, health promotion, and community development (Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, 1986, retrieved from <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ph-sp/docs/charter-chartre/pdf/charter.pdf>). It is concerned with combating oppression and injustice opening the possibility for people, organizations, and communities to gain experiences and skills. Empowerment will support building attributes and mastery over individuals' affairs toward finding some degree of control over their own lives and the systems they negotiate (Tengland, 2007; Woodall, Warwick-Booth, & Cross, 2012).

It is theorized as a construct with emotional, behavioral, and cognitive components and is contingent on interpersonal relationship systems (Christens, 2012). Empowerment is something that a person or community can have, lack, and give, fully



or partially (Tengland, 2008). Russell, Muraco, Subramaniam, and Laub (2009) explored the empowerment construct within a leadership alliance of gay-straight youth. An emergent theme from the youth was about interpersonal connections:

To empower someone else is to, well, literally, it's to give them power, but ... I think it goes like hand in hand with encouragement, because you can't be empowered and stay empowered for very long if you're not...connected with other people. (p. 899)

Page and Czuba (1999) state that while we cannot give people power and we cannot make them *empowered*, we can provide the opportunities, resources, and support that they need. Active and critical engagement does not occur in a vacuum again supporting the notion of empowerment as a relational process (Gamlin, 2003).

Fundamental to the work of Carl Rogers (1961) is his belief that we cannot teach another person, only facilitate his or her learning. Freire (2007) found that teaching was actually part of the oppressive order, that only dialogue could produce true learning, leading to emancipation. Formulation of the problem, solutions, and the decision to solve the problem all rest with the individual along with the creation of a climate to support change founded on unconditional positive regard, authenticity, and humility (Tengland, 2007). There is evidence showing that empowerment-based interventions focusing on the individual can increase participants' psychological well-being, including self-efficacy, confidence, and self-esteem.

The roles of relationships in power asymmetries maintaining domination, and causing violence, have been the focus of many studies while systematic attention to the relational context in empowerment theory and the development and exercise of transformative power, much less so (Christens, 2012). Laverack (2004) suggests that

power is at the core of empowerment, either power over or power from within. Power is inherent in relationships suffusing all interpersonal interactions and discourses (Christens, 2012). We may empower others by managing the power dynamic in any given relationship. Power transformation happens through offering advice and strategies to develop empowerment (self-esteem and self-confidence) and requires a high degree of self-vigilance to acknowledge the other individual's internal expertise allowing the transformational process to begin (Christens, 2012; Laverack, 2004). Power from within is gained from religious, spiritual, or philosophical sources, by experiencing self-truth and integrity while building mastery and or bonding with others.

Rather than looking at a specific symptom or problem with a client, Gerity (1998) looks for the larger picture. There is a whole person behind the symptom and the cultural system behind the person. According to Brass (2004), "empowerment, wellness, and culture are simultaneously an integral part of day-to-day living and continue to exist ... in today's world" (p. 95). Culture functions as the immune system of society as well as the psychological immune system of the traditional Elders she interviewed who believe that a strong culture deflects threats to mental health in later life. Many women shared with me that Lora's success at changing her life and staying out of prison and being actively engaged in community support work was a source of great encouragement, and one in particular said that it was empowering for her: "if Lora can do it, so can I."

One final area for consideration in this question of influence towards empowerment is the emerging science of mirror neurons. According to Goleman (2006),

Neuroscientist Giacomo Rizzolatti, MD, discovered this phenomenon, a sort of neural WiFi, by accident in 1992. This concept is not entirely new as psychoanalytical thinkers formulated the notion of mirroring described as the attunement between two people and the reflection of understanding another person's emotional state long ago (Goleman, 1995). Today functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and positron emission tomography (PET) scans are revealing that cortical neurons in the Mirror Neuron System (MNS) respond and light up, mirroring neural bases of the emotional state and energy of others and thus contributing to social cognition, most particularly empathy (Hunter, Hurley, & Taber, 2013, Siegel, 2011).

The human brain has many mirror neuronal systems; some are thought to be essential for imitative learning, and some considered the root of empathy (Siegel, 2011). The natural human ability for connection to the internal flow of another person's mind is perhaps reason to consider the importance of these systems in the empowerment of others through the sincere belief in their potential by a supportive friend or facilitator, reflecting and holding hope.

*Critical reflection.*

Critical reflection is a skill both Freire (2007) and Mezirow (2000) believe to be absolutely necessary for transformational learning to occur. Once developed, it will assist the process of change, through learning to ask relevant questions and exploring fundamental beliefs and assumptions, identifying passive or active voice, metaphor and chosen words. Objective reframing is a critical review of the assumptions of others and subjective reframing involves a review of our own. Mezirow (2000, 2003) believes that we can learn to critically reflect on our subjective experience. It is a skill

that can be taught through the developmental stages of learning, requiring a level of emotional maturity and the ability to identify one's own emotions, and sensitivity to others. What is *object* in our knowing describes the thoughts and feelings we speak of and our taken for granted conventional wisdoms.

Mezirow (2000) cites Kegan (1994) in his explanation of the growth of the mind as "liberating ourselves from that in which we are embedded, making what was subject into object so that we can 'have it' rather than 'be had' by it" (p. 25). He reinforces this idea: "making 'what is' a mere instance of 'what might be'" (Kegan, 1982, p. 38). This leads to acquiring the ability to make reasoned choices independent of external influences and constraints. With this skill we can begin to develop understandings of self in relation to others building empathy, through *Mindsight* toward gaining deeper levels of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995; Siegel, 2011). Kegan (2000) says simply that informative learning involves what we know and transformative learning involves how we know.

*Praxis.*

The first stage of building a pedagogy of oppressed people, according to Freire (2007), is the development of the individual's awareness of his or her oppressed circumstance, relating also to Mezirow's (1991) emancipatory learning. For prisoners this includes the identification and realization of the extent of their various dependencies. To no longer be vulnerable to the forces maintaining addiction and criminal behaviour the individual must become aware of whether they are internal (mental) and or environmental, social, or political. This can only be achieved by reflection and action (praxis) upon these forces in order to transform the vulnerability

of resistance to change. According to an Aboriginal perspective transformative praxis can occur in any sequence from internalized beliefs to social constructions or the reverse (Cohen, 2001). Cree philosophy is drawn out of praxis, from the practical side of life (Hansen & Charlton, 2013).

It is this connection of action to reflection that creates the threshold for transformation: There is no transformation without action. The potential action within the setting of a prison could be self-direction in new learning, perhaps seeking a mentor, or engaging in community service work. According to Freire (2007), awareness cannot grow or exist without hope and humility.

*Empathy.*

Nurturing the growth of empathy and commitment to society can change the criminal to valued citizen: object to subject. Empathy and other emotional experiences may be misinterpreted due to lack of understanding, masked by anger, or buried for fear of the vulnerability associated with emotionality. In childhood the reflection and interaction with a healthy loving adult will initiate and develop emotional fluency and expression. In the absence of this a relationship with teacher/mentor in adulthood can support the development of emotional intelligence.

Perry (2009) discusses the template of relational interactions formed in early childhood, through either nurturance for resilience or inconsistent and abusive interactions causing anxiety and vulnerability. The latter causing a decrease in the ability of the person to benefit from nurturing, caring, and beneficial adults or support people. This idea was first discussed by Sullivan in 1953 who described this process as leading to a malevolent attitude making it practically impossible for an adult to feel

positively disposed towards a child or to be kind. The child will display a malevolent attitude to avoid the potential for yet another violation of his or her trust. This behaviour can be observed in the prison setting, but rarely understood for what it masks. Lora spoke of this in an interview:

I never had really good relations with people either that I was always beaten or mistreated so anyways and that carried on to my adult-hood and the minute somebody would do something bad to me I would always react violently.

In fact she would sometimes react negatively preemptively and ask questions later; although this behavior decreased over time, it was still evident when she was stressed and afraid.

***Summary.***

While it would be correct to say that Lora transformed she also very much stayed the same, so the metamorphosis described in some of the literature on TL does not fit with my observations of her process or those of her lawyer. I have some idea of the important pieces of her change process but no particular theory so far encompasses the whole story as I understand it. There is little debate that transformation occurs; some describe it as quantum change, others as an epiphany when spiritually based, but significant changes in people happen individually and collectively and in all realms of society: but how? Could it be that transformation occurs at all stages of cognitive development and should be described in specific procedural terms but with the recognition that it will be similar *and* unique for different populations, cultures, age groups, and developmental stages?

It would be sad to think that only those with advanced cognitive abilities for autonomous and critically reflective skills could experience the liberation of

transformational learning. Freire's (2007) work with illiterate peasants and people who were disempowered and disenfranchised demonstrated that this notion of high-level cognition for critical reflection is questionable. Freire (2007), believes that "[e]very human being no matter how 'ignorant' ... is capable of looking critically at the world in a dialogic encounter with others" (p. 32). Corrections and other institutions can create the conditions and developmental programs for critical reflection skills to be learned and supported; this would be a place to intersect with other ways of knowing from Aboriginal wisdom to multiple cultural approaches leading to connected knowing.

### **Emotional**

To explore emotions requires a definition of an emotion. According to the American Psychological Association (APA) there is no widely accepted definition of emotion other than to say, it "is a relatively brief episode of synchronized evaluative physiological, behavioral, and subjective responses" (Dess, 2010, p. 3). Emotion can be confused with feelings or embodied sensations, which are the subjective experience associated with emotions. Mood is an emotional state that lasts over time, is more generalized, and together with the feeling or sensation is categorized as affect. The basis of self-awareness and regulation rests within knowing the nuances of one's physical sensations (van der Kolk, 2001).

The function of the primary emotions (anger, fear, guilt/shame, sadness, joy, trust, love, surprise, and disgust) is to regulate arousal, to direct attention, influence learning, and memory while connecting and communicating our experiences with others (Dess, 2010). Of particular importance to the emotional liberation of prisoners is

understanding anger. In most cases it is a secondary emotion often masking fear, sadness, shame, or grief. Freedom from the unconscious control of emotions unknown and unfamiliar will only emerge from the exploration and identification of long forgotten or never learned emotional connection to self. Emotional knowledge grows through parenting that validates and mirrors while soothing the emotional lability of childhood, building attachments and solid, safe individuation through the early years, setting the trait hope foundations of an individual. Winnicott (1960) refers to this as maternal empathy and “holding” as described earlier. This process can be achieved in the prison system within adult relationships with staff and or volunteers set within strong boundaries and knowledge of the process.

Emotions are the paint palette, the unconscious thermostat, and the connection of our lives and experiences; they are inseparable from reward, pain, punishment, and pleasure (Weiss, 2000). Contrary to rationalistic thought, and congruent with Aboriginal science, post-modern scholarship is describing a strong and valuable link between emotion, processing memory, and reason which is worth bringing to awareness. Emotion is essentially the attentional focusing system that locates opportunity and warns of danger; without emotional arousal learning does not take place.

Another aspect of the discussion of emotions are the often neglected, perhaps taken for granted, positive emotions of hope, joy, excitement, and others. hooks (1994) mentions this in her discussion of the importance of pleasure in the classroom, that she notes is not addressed by either feminist pedagogy or Freire (2007); neither is this aspect of change considered particularly important in much of prison programming.



Aside from advocating for fun in formal educational settings to improve learning outcomes, exposure to simple elements of daily life that can bring joy is valuable learning. Those whose lives have been tied to immediate gratification and synthetic experiences of pleasure as a means of compensating for the lack of healthy attached relationships and purposeful lives while masking pain will benefit most. van der Kolk (2002) frequently mentions the loss of experiencing joy related to complex PTSD.

*Attachment.*

Attachment theory is relevant in understanding the relationship between early bonding or the interruption or nondevelopment of secure bonding to a caregiver (Bowlby, 1988; Schore, 2002; Schore & Schore, 2008; Winnicott, 1960). Children are subcortical creatures, driven initially by tactile and kinesthetic sensations exquisitely associated with the main caregiver, gradually shifting as cortical control develops and healthy mindful tracking of sensations is learned in safety (Ogden & Minton, 2000). Research has shown that a very high percentage of female prisoners are poorly attached (Turnbull, 1996). Experience and observation have caused me to question this bleak outlook, hence the focus of this research. Attachment theory is primarily though not only concerned with the child and maternal relationship.

According to Stevenson-Hinde (2007), it is often overlooked that children may be raised in families or other groupings and therefore the communications supporting attachment occur beyond the dyad. However, patterns originating in the mother's childhood may well lead to disruptions in her parental relationships, perhaps looking solely to her partner or perhaps leading to an inverted relationship, treating the child as younger than he or she is so as to maintain the dependence and availability of the child

as an attachment figure. This could certainly be observed as a behavior Lora engaged in with her son as one possible indicator of her attachment profile.

Many ex-prisoners report the importance of a mentor or ally who stood beside them as they journeyed through change (NC4RSO, 2011). Hunter and Greer (2011) reinforce the value of this role in their exploration of the identity and development of self amongst incarcerated women. When trust is built and safety is established women seem able to explore new ideas of self and to try out new experiences that are foreign and often feared, including building relationships and tentative bonding.

***Language of emotion.***

Alexithymia is the inability to identify or speak of emotions, especially in relation to trauma (Ross, 2009; <http://www.psychiatrictimes.com/somatoform-disorder/when-patient-has-no-story-tell-alexithymia>). In the correctional setting, many could be said to be alexithymic; many more will have at some stage secondary alexithymia when experiencing panic or periods of depression. However, it is believed this secondary loss of words will disappear when the psychological stressors are removed, as dissonance diminishes, and emotional awareness grows.

Another point to consider is that “[o]ral cultures often have such a reverence for the spoken word that they develop elaborate rules governing when, with whom and in what circumstances certain kinds of things may be spoken about” (Ross, 2009, p. 9).

Ross goes on to cite Nadia Ferrara, a psychologist working with the Cree of Northern Quebec:

The expression of one's inner thoughts and feelings are viewed as so sacred to healing ceremonies and special, private encounters that it is totally inappropriate for a Cree person to share his/her feelings within a strange environment, such as a

clinical milieu”, unless the clinician has first established an accepted relationship as a healer. (p. 9)

Many women in prison have demonstrated difficulty naming any emotions beyond anger and shame. Furthermore they are often unable to identify how they experience the emotion, how it feels in the body, and therefore have little ability to intercede when triggered. Exploring this is difficult and for some feels dangerous' opening up an unfamiliar world many have successfully buried, hence the importance of building an understanding of each learner's stressors and actively nurturing the learning alliance.

### ***Resilience.***

Early studies of resiliency concentrated on the qualities of the individual but broadened to recognize that certain protective factors were external. This included a supportive relationship with a role model or mentor that could buffer negative patterns supporting the ability to do well despite adversity. Perry (2009) shares a recurring observation that healthy relationships are protective and influential in healing from stress, distress, and trauma, along with an emerging understanding of genetic factors that appear to influence hardiness and or sensitivity. There is growing acceptance that there are three levels of protective factors, being the individual, the family, and the community; similar to the findings of the Search Institute's Assets lists. Theory is moving from resilience as trait based to an internal and external process which changes through time (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008). Exploring the notion of learned helplessness caused by repeated experiences of uncontrollable and unpredictable stimuli reinforces the premise that external forces are important considerations (Evans & Cassells, 2014).

Poverty may lead to a chaotic environment and is more damaging to resilience if the chaos crosses multiple domains of life. Children growing up poor and in disordered homes in comparison to more affluent peers frequently have diminished self-efficacy and lessened sense of personal power over events in their lives (Evans & Cassells, 2014).

*Aboriginal resilience.*

There is growing research on the specific resiliency of Aboriginal people: The importance of connection to the land is powerful and foundational to their resilience. Another principle making it a unique theory of resiliency is in the focus on exploring the ability to seek success rather than the traditional search for simply overcoming adversity from a troubled childhood: that hardship can result in better than normally predicted outcomes. Mobilizing the individual and the community with culture-related resources is vital to creating opportunity for a dynamic process of adjustment, transformation and adaptation potentially leading to an individual reciprocally changing his or her environment as well (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008; Kirmayer et al., 2011; McGuire, 2010; Wilson, 1989).

Mezirow (2000) reminds us that relationships and supportive environments play a crucial role in the development of the skills necessary for becoming a critically reflective thinker and learner. Nelson (2009) also discusses the love of a parent or the support of a mentor as being a significant factor in helping people to succeed, and that this affective dimension within stories aids transformational learning.

Relationship is a recurrent theme in the study of transformational learning and here again is the representation of both outside supporter and the development of internal

friendship with self. Warren (1885) describes the importance of relationship for Aboriginal people through Totems:

An individual of any one of the several Totems belonging to a distinct tribe, as for instance, the Ojibway, is a close blood relation to all other Indians of the same Totem, both in his own and all other tribes, though he may be divided from them by a long vista of years, interminable miles, and knows not even of their existence. (p. 43)

Lora's Clan Totem was the Bear and interestingly her self-chosen *street name* was

Koala. Warren (1885) goes on to describe the Bear Clan:

The No-ka or Bear family are more numerous than any of the other clans of the Ojibways, forming fully one sixth of the entire tribe.... They are the acknowledged war chiefs and warriors of the tribe, and are keepers of the war pipe and war-club, and are often denominated the bulwarks of the tribe against its enemies. It is a general saying, and an observable fact, amongst their fellows, that the Bear clan resemble the animal that forms their Totem in disposition. They are ill-tempered and fond of fighting, and consequently they are noted as ever having kept the tribe in difficulty and war with other tribes, in which, however, they have generally been the principal and foremost actors. They are physically noted, and the writer has observed the fact, that they are possessed of a long, thick, coarse head of the blackest hair, which seldom becomes thin or white in old age. (p. 50)

The Bear Clan members were the strong and steady police and legal guardians, spending a lot of time patrolling the land surrounding the village

(<http://en.copian.ca/library/learning/chikiken/page23.htm>). Reading these words is

extraordinary in how closely it describes Lora, her recollection of family history and the struggle she fought within herself. She was 5 foot 10 inches, a solid and muscular woman who had lustrous, thick black hair: Her tall elderly aunts still have long dark hair. Lora would often tell me stories of events and people she met and observed in her community; she became well known to many who were otherwise not often *seen*. She was always alert and observing new people arriving in her community.

***Summary.***

Tying this all together identifies the connections between the trait aspects of resiliency and in Lora's case described so well through her clan affiliations with the importance of the supportive relationships with mentors and the connection of and ability to attach to individual people, places, and communities. Thus describing a socio-cultural-environmental theory of Indigenous resiliency based on spirituality, traditional activities, traditional language, and traditional healing; always within the acknowledged presence of substantial risk factors to thriving (Fleming, & Ledogar, 2008).

**Physical**

We use our minds not to discover facts but to hide them. ...

One of the things the screen hides most effectively is the body, our own body, by which I mean, the ins of it, its interiors. Like a veil thrown over the skin to secure its modesty, but not too well, the screen partially removes from the mind the inner states of the body, those that constitute the flow of life as it wanders in the journey of each day.

The alleged vagueness, elusiveness and intangibility of emotions and feelings are probably ... an indication of how we cover the representation of our bodies, of how much mental imagery ... masks the reality of the body. (Damasio, 1999, p. 28)

There is emerging recognition in cognitive science of embodied cognition in that cognitive processes are deeply rooted in the body's interactions with the world.

Powerful knowledge is available by becoming open and aware of the body's states such as feelings in the heart, muscle trembling, sensation in the belly, or the rhythm of breathing (Ogden & Minton, 2000; Siegel, 2011). The body in fact has a central role in shaping the mind (Wilson, 2002). We hold deep knowledge and wisdom in our bodies, keeping stories and memories below our awareness. We will benefit from learning to listen to our bodies to tap into our potential. These memories and stories

may have no verbal language and so whole-body, creative and active processes can be recruited to hear this pre-verbal internal intuitive voice (Lawrence, 2012; Ogden & Minton, 2000).

Mezirow's (2003) disorienting dilemmas come with physical and emotional dimensions, as tension is present in muscles and joints before we are consciously aware of emotional distress. According to Sullivan (1953), "very severe fear and very severe anxiety...feel the same—that is the felt component is identical—but the discrimination between these two powerful disjunctive processes in life is at times vital" (p. 204). The symptoms experienced by traumatized individuals are often somatically based. The work of healing is to cultivate awareness of unresolved sensorimotor reactions to triggers, gradually teasing the bodily sensations apart from the driving emotion and identifying where and how emotions are felt (Giddens, 1991; Ogden & Minton, 2000).

Kinesthetic intelligence (visual and tactile), as well as emotional, social, and cognitive learning, become embodied knowing helping us to fully know ourselves. Profound experiential learning holds the potential for transformation. According to Clark (2001), the usual understanding of experiential learning has been of a cognitive experience, followed by a reflective process, locating the learning in the reflection. The body, however, must also be recognized as a site of actual learning and is the embodiment of the self. Consciousness of the self emerges through bodily differentiation, the body being more than an entity; it is a practical mode of dealing with external situations, events, and experiences (Giddens, 1991). Privileging rationality in learning has been a form of dominance and a way of colonizing.

Embodied learning is a way of decolonizing and liberating subjugated knowledge (Freire, 2007).

Embodied experiences, however, are perplexing, according to Freiler (2008).

Complex discussions of this issue are trying to determine exactly what is, an embodied felt sense way of knowing. The very nature of maintaining homeostasis (physiological and biological balance) points to the ability to tap into these sensory, physical body resources, so necessary for survival. A question for future research is to understand how we become aware of them.

Within the context of exploring healing with women who have experienced multiple traumas often involving sexual violation and physical violence, the body and body image must be included in the work through safe exploration of bodily sensations, feelings, and impulses. Teaching experientially the boundaries of safe personal space and appropriate intimacy spheres is important for making these decisions autonomously. This population has a keen sensory awareness of their surroundings but all too frequently will not trust or feel entitled or safe to act on their intuitive embodied way of recognizing who is dangerous and who is not. In a prison they do not always have the power to decide.

The connection of mind and body is becoming better understood through the science of psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) as described by Lipton (2005) and Pert (1997). There is little disagreement that our thinking and emotions can impact our physiology and so it is true in reverse. The power of this connection is described by Frankl (1984): A friend in the prison camp shared with him a dream in which his question of when the war would be over was given an exact date of March 30, 1945.



On March the 29<sup>th</sup> the friend became ill, was unconscious by the 30<sup>th</sup>, and died on March 31<sup>st</sup>.

Those who know how close the connection is between the state of mind of a man—his courage and hope, or lack of them—and the state of immunity of his body will understand that the sudden loss of hope and courage can have a deadly effect. (pp. 96-97)

Likewise, how the physical body is nourished and hydrated, exercised and rested will also have significant influence on the brain chemistry and therefore the cognitive processing and emotional experiences of any person.

### ***Summary***

Beyond the context of concentration camps, and relevant to this story is the history of assimilation which required separating Aboriginal children from their parents' "baneful influence" according to the Bagot Commission in 1842 (Kelm, 1998). Assimilation through education became the government policy. A method of capturing minds by "capturing bodies first; indeed, residential schooling had at its very core, the desire to physically supervise, contain, and control the population of First Nations youth ... subjecting them to a pedagogy designed to ignore or demean their cultures" (Kelm, 1998, p. 59). The result for some described as "cross-cultural zombies, empty bodies moving across a landscape of which they cannot quite be a part" (p. 79). This has chilling resonance with the story told by a man interviewed for this project as he described his life after residential school.

### **Spiritual**

The spiritual domain is under addressed within the correctional programming area. However my observation over the years has been of a positive correlation between

spiritual growth and healing from trauma, resulting in a decrease in personally and socially detrimental or negative thought patterns and behaviours. Maté (2009) states that at the “core of all addictions there lies a spiritual void” (p. 79).

“It is part of the human spirit to endure and give a miracle a chance to happen.”  
(Groopman, 2004, p. 81)

### **Spirituality in learning.**

Tisdell (2008) brings attention to the role of spirituality in adult learning, although she relates that the subject is often marginalized in the academy and misunderstood by some as synonymous with religion. Certainly the discussion of where and how religion and spirituality intersect is beyond the scope of this dissertation but for the purpose of this review, spirituality will be understood as the connection to something greater than our physical selves, a way to achieve wholeness and authenticity. It will be explored because of the importance of *manitou* described in the next section for Ojibway people and the connection of this aspect of human experience to transformative learning. Fowler and Keen (1978) are two theorists whose work, reviewed below, can be seen to connect strongly with the processes of transformation through learning described by Mezirow, Kegan, and others.

In her exploration of spirituality in learning, Tisdell (2008) found three experiences most frequently described. Some reported spirituality as universal across cultures. Some as significant dreams and daytime synchronicities: sacred moments offering “new learning about hope, healing and direction in times of difficulty” (p. 31). For some it is the interconnectedness of everything. Participants in her study tended to slip

into metaphorical and symbolic language, perhaps connected to the imaginal realm as they described their personal spiritual experience.

hooks (1994) recognizes the importance of a spiritual component in learning, quoting Thich Nhat Hanh who offers a way of thinking about pedagogy emphasizing wholeness, connection of body, mind, and spirit. Teachers, according to hooks, must be engaged in a process of self-actualization and building personal well-being in order to lead and help others on a learning journey that is meaningful and connects their learning to their life experiences and place within the world. Here I am reminded to recall the transformational journey of Lora as one connected to her spirituality and also one of transformation for us both. This seems to be at the heart of the liberation sought from object/offender to subject/citizen. Only when there is realization of the true self and self in relation to others can the object hope to transform to subject of the greater community.

Fowler (1995) believes that this process of developing perspectives on the deeper meanings of life is best described using the word *faith* and created a hierarchical, sequential, and invariant model of the stages of faith. He was considerably influenced by Piaget and Kohlberg and most particularly by Erikson's psychosocial stages of development throughout the lifespan.

Keen (1983), while describing 5 stages, does so from a normative approach, asking what human potential really is and how that builds towards human life at its best; what he calls super-health. He says that although life is in one sense linear, "in the depths of the unconscious, there are no straight lines, no time, no before or after" (p. 31).

Fowler and Keen (1978) both recognize the unfolding story of lives as circular: "The spiral rather than the arrow inscribes the geometry of the spirit" (Keen, 1983, p. 50).

Keen (1983) believes there is a perennial human need to connect with something larger than our own fragile and brief moment of life on earth. Birth creates distance, a new separation between mother and child. It begins a journey of identity development as an individual person safe or fearful, loved or loathed, able or feeble. "Mother is anxious; therefore the world is dangerous. Or, Mother is calm; therefore the world is safe" (p. 41). From this place the child begins to discover the world and freedom through play as safe or not, attached or alone.

The child learns through playing and imagination using all five senses in his or her development; this play is serious business, according to Keen (1983). The importance of this concept fits for me, as I have known many women in prison who are damaged and emotionally delayed and unable to play. Intuitively I asked women when they stopped playing. Not infrequently the answer was a definitive age: perhaps 6 or even earlier. They describe becoming a parent to siblings or just withdrew from growing, stunted and the magic of childhood stolen; robbed of love and loving. The journey to healing requires us to unveil the pain of childhood and become aware of the various ways we have tried to fill the void and "to hold our hope and our disappointment simultaneously" (p. 50). It is most significantly about seeing the destructive behaviours as problem-solving mechanisms and finding new ways to a solution.

Fowler (1995) believes that faith is a human universal, endowed at birth but that its progression is dependent on nurture and the kinds of environments, communities, and languages we grow in. Faith is the search for meaning and purpose in our lives.

Fowler states that faith and religion are reciprocal and each one deepens and grows the other involving “an alignment of the heart or will, a commitment of loyalty and trust” (p. 11); it is an orientation of the whole person and generic to all people. Fowler draws from Kohlberg’s stages of moral development which follow periods of disequilibrium and Erikson’s psychosocial stages responding to resolving crises; these stages are cumulative. Each stage carries forward the mixed residue of past solutions and requires reworking containing the anticipation of the issues of crises in future stages.

Keen (in Fowler & Keen, 1978) describes a spiritual life explored internally, intrinsically, innate, and available with encouragement and self-exploration, accessible to us all: empowering, self-respecting, and dignifying. In this idea there is a sense of hope for humanity, perhaps indicating not revulsion to our potential for cruelty, but an acceptance of a dialectical self. Fowler supports this also by describing his notion of a “person who can see the unity of all the fantastic plurality . . . who has a nonegocentric unity” (Fowler & Keen, 1978, p. 131). Compassion follows from this unity bridging the lone individual to the community.

**Ojibway Spirit: Manitou.**



*Figure 1.* Manitou written in Canadian Aboriginal Syllabics.

The Ojibway “are the initiators of the grand rite of religious belief which they believe the Great Spirit has granted to his red children to secure them long life on earth, and life hereafter” (Warren, 1885, p. 26). Warren goes on to say that *Ke-che-*

*mun-e-do* (Great Spirit) is the name used by the Ojibway people for the being equivalent to God or *Ke-zha-mune-do*, which means pitying, charitable, overruling, guardian, and merciful Spirit.

*Manitou* is understood as a contactable spirit; every single thing on earth has *manitou*. The Ojibway cosmology covered earlier in the section on Ojibway healing practices describes the universe as consisting of eight layers, four below the earth level and four above. There is a great *manitou* in the very bottom layer who is in charge of the earth and lives in absolute darkness. The other great *manitou* spirit lives in the highest layer above the ground in the sky and in perpetual illumination. This dialectical cosmology expresses the Ojibway regard for the mysteries and the variety of the universe (Grim, 1983). *Matchi Manitou* is the evil spirit assailing humans with disease and other intrusions residing in the cosmic waters that separate the earth and the sky layers. Lora once told me that swampy wet land is the place where the earth cleanses itself and that nobody should swim or bathe in those waters. The Ojibway beliefs and rites associated with their fasts and dreams are of great importance to them and respect for this must be observed in the learning environment wherever that may be.

***Summary.***

I grew up privileged, in middle-class Britain with the hierarchical nature of a society that constantly compares one with another and leaves many never good enough. I work in a punitive system built on power over and better than, struggling daily to nurture the possibility of hope. My daily struggle, trying to assist individuals in making sense of their story and creating a new one for the future, knowing all the

while that as Keen (1978) says “what hurts me hurts others” (p. 143) and, as Lora’s cousin said, “hurt people hurt people.” Keen’s (1978) comment resonates: The “spiritual crisis of this nation is the loss of a vision of who and what we are” (p. 155). Hope lies in relationships built on trust that are the vision boards for spiritual growth.

### **Hope theory**

This literature review has briefly covered many of the building blocks overarching the trauma healing journey. All are necessary for consideration when supporting people with complex trauma histories, while also attending to cultural and social specifics, especially within the custodial and community settings of the justice system. With every arch there is a key-stone that is the strength and mainstay; this exploration of Lora’s journey, and supported by the stories of many other women of various cultures revealed that a significant key to success is the dedicated nurturance of hope or the belief in possibility. Frankl (1984) knew well the importance of hope and the necessity of concrete meaning in personal existence. In *Man’s Search for Meaning* Frankl (1984) shares,

Those who know how close the connection is between the state of mind of a man his courage and hope, or lack of them, and the state of immunity of his body will understand that the sudden loss of hope and courage can have a deadly effect. (p. 96)

Erikson (2000), states that “[h]ope is both the earliest and most indispensable virtue inherent in the state of being alive” (p. 192). Snyder (1994) shares this, believing that secure early attachment will facilitate hope related learning.

Snyder’s (1994, 2002) two-factor theory of hope and the state and trait hope tests have been validated from thousands of responses and much theoretical debate.

However, it failed to replicate in Mexican respondents (Arndt, 2004). Both Snyder’s

hope theory along with Seligman (2002), and Scheier and Carver's (1992) theories of dispositional optimism represent a Western perspective on hope and optimism, based on goal setting that, according to Parse (1999), is the cognitive or rational aspect of hope and hoping. There is a dearth of literature on the concept of hope and optimism constructs from other cultural epistemologies (Arndt, 2004). I found reference to hope in the teachings of the Tipi by a Cree Elder that is discussed in the section on individual and interdependent hope.

Although goal setting may not be a significant focus for all cultures a future-focused construct of possibility is a part of any society that settles, builds relationships, and creates art or adornments that may take long periods of time to achieve. A broader perspective of hope based in mastery, attachment, survival, and spirituality was described by Scioli, Ricci, Nyugen, and Scioli, in 2011. Although the language may not fit particularly well, the concepts of building and maintaining hope certainly fit with the journey of Lora's life. I say this with full respect for and the possibility of hope being a construct that does not fit with an Aboriginal worldview; this is what I want to learn more of in the future, rather than to impose. At this point I can only use the language from my foundations (Wilson, 2008).

Snyder's (1994) theory is that hope is based on an "enduring pattern of thinking about oneself in relation to life's goals" (p. 68). It is future focused and globally implicated in personal agency. Although thought to be similar, it differs from Bandura's self-efficacy theory which has to do with agency to achieve goals but is domain and task specific. Hope allows for the rekindling of determination through willpower and when faced with hindrances to perceive them as challenges and learning



opportunities (Youssef & Luthans, 2007). Hope is also described as an emotion and is founded on the perceived competence for achievement and positively related with problem solving (Drahos, 2004; Snyder, 1999).

Scheier and Carver (1992), discussed in Gallagher and Lopez (2009), see optimism as the emphasis on a general expectation of a positive outcome. Optimism was described as a cognitive function by the majority (79%) of research participants in Bruininks and Malle's study (2006). Both constructs may well vary by situation, but certainly without true hope for the future there is no motivation to set goals or make different decisions and build new skills and strategies. McGeer (2004) states that hope is a grounding force of human agency involving a complex dynamic of psychological guises including attitude, emotion, activity, and disposition. Hope is usually associated with specific outcomes whereas optimism is more general (Bruininks & Malle, 2006). Optimism is probability: Hope is possibility.

*"I learned that my role in the prison is to hold the hope for the women until they can believe in the possibility for healing and begin to take hold of their own hope."*

Hope theories involve the personal ability and agency to make a plan and find ways to achieve a goal rather than optimism often described by research participants as being dependent on others or outside sources for success. Lora's journey aligned with hope theory as her strength was indeed set within her ability to find agency and pathways and resource herself with people who could support her goals and nurture her hope.

Hope as a socially supported vision for the future is consistent with Gabriel Marcel's (1889-1973) notion of hope as only being possible in the context of the *us* as

a communion, and that attention only to individual desire inhibits hope. Hope is embedded in “the acts of sharing and participation within a human collective” (Jacobs, 2005, p. 785). For many of us in the mental health and correctional helping professions, this is what we do; in fact on some level it is all we can do. Realizing that this alone is valuable can be protective for the staff and support people facing potential burnout in working with despairing or despondent people in a society that often does little to support our belief in the possibility for change in this population (Hillbrand & Young, 2008). Hanna (2002) states that it is the therapist’s duty to have hope and found that it is a catalyst to therapeutic change underlying all others. Levels of therapist hope and client hope appear to converge through the alliance-building process which is consistent with the contagion model of hope (Coppock, 2006). Yalom and Leszcz (2005; cited in Gilman, Schumm and Chard, 2012) asserted that the instillation of hope may be one universal goal in any individual or group therapeutic modality, and thus hope may be one non-targeted change mechanism that transcends modality” (p. 275). Gilman et al’s (2012) study found “support [for] the contention that hope is an important precursor toward symptom amelioration, even among therapies that do not overtly directly target the construct, per se” (p. 275).

Contagion effect has been studied by diverse disciplines such as social learning and social psychology in various situations and environments and is empirically supported (Norman, Luthans, & Luthans, 2005). According to Norman et al. (2005) over 50 years ago Blumer defined social contagion as interpersonal communication, circular in nature, where people perceive and reflect behaviours in unison with others’ feeling states. “Emotional states can be transferred to others via emotional contagion, leading

people to experience the same emotions without their awareness. Emotional contagion is well established in laboratory experiments, with people transferring positive and negative emotions to others” (Kramer, Guillory, & Hancock, 2014, p. 1). Their study explored the massive-scale of emotional contagion occurring through social networks. I have observed over 6 years the value of the support women gain from their own closed and dedicated Facebook group, where support, hope, and possibility are communicated rapidly in response to those posting a need.

Hope is experienced at the intersection of conditions or goals we desire to achieve and the perception of our agency to achieve them. The role of supporter is to assist the person to gain clarity about his or her degree of agency and perhaps his or her agential limitations. In such circumstances then concrete assistance in building skills and assets to achieve a higher degree of agency is worthwhile and necessary help.

### **Psychology of hope.**

Erikson (2000), describes hope as fundamental to the state of being alive; it is the most stable and lasting adaptive strength, acquiring new qualities throughout development. Hope begins with an infant's first encounter with a “trustworthy maternal person” (p. 192). This is the first experience of a new being in deciding whether or not this world is a safe place and that there is hope for being loved and sustained, gradually widening, verifying, and inspiring new hopefulness.

Development of mutuality and a ratio of trust versus mistrust, “if favorable will establish the fundamental human strength: hope” (p. 454). According to Erikson (1964), “hope is the ontogenic basis of faith” (p. 118) and grows in steps as part of an ensemble including the elements of willfulness.

Hope will give you courage and is powerful medicine for healing. According to Snyder (2002), “[h]ope, as I was coming to define it, was primarily a way of thinking, with feelings playing an important, albeit contributory role” (p. 249). He continues to explain that this positive motivational state is based on an interactively derived sense of successful agency (goal-directed energy) and pathways (planning to meet goals) neither alone is sufficient, they are reciprocal, additive, and positively related (J. Braithwaite, 2004; Peterson, Gerhardt, & Rode, 2006; Snyder, 1999). There are two major types of goals in this particular approach to hope.

The first is Type I, seeking positive goal outcome or approach goals causing the individual to

- A. Reach for the first time
- B. Sustain a present goal outcome
- C. Increase that which already has been initiated

The second is Type 2, seeking to avoid a negative outcome or avoidance goals causing the individual to

- A. Deter so that it never appears
- B. Deter so that its appearance is delayed

High hope levels are related to approach goals and lower level hope is linked to avoidance goals (Snyder, Lehman, Kluck, & Monsson, 2006).

It is interesting to note that people who experience high hope levels are cognitively flexible and will actually change the rules in order to stretch their skills; they will push themselves to achieve new and more demanding goals. If they meet a barrier they may well *re-goal*. Low hope people are frequently apprehensive about the goals they have

set and have a negative emotional set leading to self-critical ruminations and loss of focus. Snyder's theory, however, does not account for hope in individuals with little perceived control over a hoped for outcome or the altruistic hope an individual may hold for another person's success (Bruininks & Malle, 2006).

#### Snyder's (2002) hope model

contains both feed-forward and feedback emotion-laden mechanisms that contribute to the person's success in his or her goal pursuits....[H]ope theory involves an interrelated system of goal-directed thinking that is responsive to feedback at various points in the temporal sequence. (p. 255)

This leads to the notion that there is skill in hoping well; "it is an art like reasoning well, or imagining well, or caring well for self and for others" (McGeer, 2004, p. 110). Perhaps hoping well can be learned and refined.

Hope can be described both as a trait and a state and that while significantly correlated, they are unique. Trait hope is stable and by observing a person's learning history it is possible to identify his or her dispositional or trait hope thoughts. Pathways and agency thinking are both learned early in life as described by Erikson (2000) and embedded by age 3 or thereabouts. They are also impacted by developmental factors and experiences. Low hope people may not have been taught to incorporate goal developments into their cognitive repertoire (Snyder, Lehman, Kluck, & Monsson, 2006).

State hope, however, is more malleable and suggestible; increasing state hope levels is best achieved through problem-solving and solution-focused strategies. While positive verbal cues do little to increase state hope as is successful with other state-based variables, negative verbal cues reduce state hope levels in a laboratory setting

(Peterson et al, 2006). This is a very important point to consider in a correctional setting. Dependent on the goals of the intervention a practitioner will either work in the state or trait realm. Gilman et al. (2012), found that “patients suffering from traumatic stress often initially report a profound sense of hopelessness when first undergoing therapy” (p. 270). Symptom reduction will be effective by approaching the state hope or skill development and core belief changes work in the trait hope of a person. A hope-centred therapy has been suggested and would attend to whole brain processes.

Gallagher and Lopez (2009) discovered that hope and optimism are related, while having distinct latent constructs. They found that optimism is more strongly associated with the hedonic well-being and hope more strongly associated with eudaimonic well-being having a statistically significant effect on each of the six components of eudaimonic well-being.

The list below shows the description of each style of well-being:

Hope: Eudaimonic well-being

- ✓ Autonomy
- ✓ Environmental mastery
- ✓ Personal growth
- ✓ Positive relations
- ✓ Purpose in life
- ✓ Self-acceptance

Optimism: Hedonic well-being

- ✓ Positive affect

- ✓ Negative affect
- ✓ Life satisfaction

Self-esteem and self-efficacy, self-referential thinking, and well-being are all factors that are discussed in the literature but it is not universally agreed as to which, if any, have direct influence on hope levels in the individual.

Finally there is the notion of hope and hopelessness being opposite ends of a spectrum. According to Flaskas (2007) an alternative way to think of this is that they are dialectic and may be coexisting experiences allowing for the possibility of strong hope and strong hopelessness existing side by side. The landscape of human experience is rarely as simple as one or the other.

#### **The biology of hope.**

Groopman (2004) interviewed Bruce Cohen, Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School for a deeper look at the biology of hope. Cohen begins with describing emotion as activities of the mind and as a manifestation of the brain. The products of the mind such as emotions, thoughts, perceptions, desires, and so forth are little more than a mix of chemicals and electrical circuits that have evolved over millennia and are still changing. So too, says Cohen (in Groopman, 2004), “is consciousness—our memory of the past, awareness of the present, and anticipation of the future” (p. 167). He recommends a place to start looking at the biology of hope is in the placebo effect, based on belief and expectation: two cardinal components of hope. Flaskas (2007) describes the placebo effect in family therapy as the client’s capacity to hope for change. Placebo interventions, medications, and surgeries are far from inactive; they have significant biological and therapeutic effect and teach us a lot

about how belief and expectation influence and interact with pain and physical debility. All aspects of the clinical context might benefit by “understanding the effectiveness of placebos and other healing interventions requires knowledge of the person’s social world, contexts and commitments” (Kirmayer, 2011, p. 112).

According to Waldren (2013), the placebo effect is often the dismissive reasoning applied to the efficacy of Aboriginal procedures engaging spiritual and sometimes supernatural forces discussed by medical anthropologists. However, it also points to the endogenous healing capacities of human beings, deserving more study, recognition, and incorporation into all areas of health and psychological care in every setting. Perhaps this is already here with the mainstream medical study of the mind/body/spirit system, which includes immune dysfunction now called psychoneuroimmunoendocrinology (PNI; Pert, 1997). Western scientists are again drilling down to understand the minute mechanisms at work, and are also recognizing the importance of a holistic, systems view accounting for the relationship of all systems and organs in the body.

Another relatively new and related area of research is *neuroplasticity*. It is the term used to describe the ability to build new neural connections throughout life and within relational settings. The growth happens in response to experiences and literally shapes our brain (Siegel, 2011). Each neuron has about ten thousand connections or synapses, linking to other neurons creating a potential of trillions of connections, literally lighting up the brain revealing predictable activity in certain areas under specific tasks. Which comes first is not yet fully understood; mental activity stimulates brain firing just as neurons firing create mental activity. Construction theorists take a systems



perspective assuming that emotions draw on multiple areas in the mind and body forming patterned responses, whereas Core theorists describe regions or centers in the brain housing individual emotions (Scioli et al., 2011). The only solid fact we can know is that true hope is future oriented and supports optimism assisting people to believe in the possibility of a happy, healthy, drug- and crime-free life.

When interviewed by Groopman (2004), Richard Davidson defines hope this way:

I understand hope as an emotion made up of two parts: a cognitive part and an affective part. When we hope for something, we employ, to some degree, our cognition, marshalling information and data relevant to a desired future event... But hope also involves what I call affective forecasting—that is, the comforting, energizing, elevating feeling that you experience when you project in your mind a positive future. This requires the brain to generate a different affective or feeling state, than the one you are currently in. (p. 193)

Davidson agrees with Damasio (1994) that the convenient divide between cognition and emotion is artificial and perhaps misleading.

An example of how this connection operates can be shown by damage to the amygdalae. If both are damaged or diseased the patient will be unable to process information that should, in normal brains, invoke fear among other emotions. The amygdalae are small almond-shaped groups of nuclei located in the medial temporal lobe regions of the brain. They form part of the limbic system thought to be the oldest part of the brain and responsible for emotional reactions and along with the hypothalamus they are involved in memory.

When the amygdalae are stimulated by a potential threat there is an immediate physiological response: a pounding heart, muscle tension, sweat and possibly nausea, the embodied knowing of fear. It causes the release of hormones from the hypothalamus which acts on the pituitary to release more hormones which go to the

adrenal glands to release the stress-related hormone, cortisol. Damage to the amygdalae has been shown to reduce or eradicate the person's ability to read facial expressions and understand the nuances of social behaviours: significant in this study because "[h]ope incorporates fear into the process of rational deliberation and tempers it so we can think and choose without panic" (Groopman, 2004, p. 199).

Massey (2002, cited in Drahos, 2004) in a recent review of the evolutionary evidence, points out that "emotionality preceded rationality in evolutionary time and that it remains a dominant force in human behaviour" (p. 23). Groopman (2004) relates this to the difference between false hope and true hope. "False hope can lead to intemperate choices and flawed decision making. True hope takes into account the real threats that exist and seeks to navigate the best path around them" (p. 198). People with PTSD have a very difficult time registering the difference between a real present-time threat and one triggered from memory. In the absence of neural malfunction and reality distortions however, Snyder et al. (2006) believe that there is no support for the notion of false hope. Thinking in a hopeful manner is not consistent with the pursuit of unattainable goals; they found it more likely that high-hope individuals would terminate their work towards unreachable goals. This is relevant because of the higher than usual potential for inhibited or damaged brain development in the traumatized prison population and the possibility of neural malfunction due to narcotic and alcohol abuse. Reality distortion is also commonly discussed as a core issue for the women in custody.

Although there is no specific hope centre of the brain or hope neurotransmitter there is an area of the brain called the anterior cingulate, near the temples which researchers

believe participates in “the complex process of conflict resolution, the weighing of opposing choices, and the ultimate decision to follow a certain path, a key in how hope may influence cognition” (Groopman, 2004, p. 201). The hippocampus is involved in hope as it is integral to declarative memories especially of personal experiences, and how they are retrieved. “Hope integrates information and feeling derived from present circumstances, and it also draws on experiences of the past” (p. 201). The hippocampus is particularly sensitive to cortisol, a stress-related hormone, and so here is the intersection of stress on memory and perhaps hope.

These mechanisms are only just beginning to be understood and are relevant in the study of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which seems far more debilitating in people with a small hippocampus (Kühn & Gallinat, 2013). The question is whether some were born with it being smaller making them more prone to PTSD or if the cortisol released by trauma experiences and re-living the memories subsequently shrinks the hippocampus. People diagnosed with PTSD seem to have difficulty finding hope for their future because the trauma memories cause so much pain and anxiety. It is highly likely that Lora could have been diagnosed with PTSD although I do not think it was ever officially labeled. She also had a frontal lobe injury from a time when at 2 years old, her father dropped her head-first on a rock: she believed he had done so on purpose.

### **Developmental processes of learning to hope.**

Scioli et al. (2011) introduce a theory of hope drawn from multiple disciplines, including psychology, philosophy, theology, and medicine. Their integrative approach describes four components: attachment, mastery, survival/coping motives, as well as

spirituality. They agree with Snyder (1994) and Erikson (2000) that attachment could well be the linchpin from which all forms of hope derive from the provision of safe spheres to explore and experiment making the first bonding and the earliest developmental stages of life so important in the base of trait hope. Lora's grandfather was a significant attachment figure in her early childhood, allowing her to explore the bush in safety and he was someone that she referred to often. Talking to him in her silent moments brought great comfort.

The earliest formation of pathways thinking and goal directedness is a necessary and inevitable ontogenetic process that shapes the foundation of an identity of self and builds a personal worldview. It is only when goals are set and barriers are actively confronted and solved, typically with aid from coaches, that children will develop their agency for grappling with obstacles when pursuing goals and recognizing the world is not simply chaotic and random. If they fail to have success in confronting barriers they may incorrectly conclude that any efforts to participate in linkages or cause and effect and resetting a goal will be fruitless; here perhaps begins a life of disempowerment and learned helplessness. The over-protective parents or coaches can also inadvertently induce a child's erroneous belief in his or her minimal or non-existent ability to influence the outcome in their lives. Appropriately responsive parents or coaches will instill in the child the sequences of events that need to happen to achieve a desired outcomes and over time this pathways thinking will evolve into more sophisticated cognitive representations (Snyder, 1994).

With repetition and time the child will eventually understand that there is an "I" who is the main instigator for achieving desired outcomes and this brings with it the

emergence of willpower. A significant learning through this process is that of waiting. Reinforcing patience, rather than the opposite behaviour, learning that nothing but negative outbursts will achieve attaining the goal, is invaluable learning. Perspective taking will begin to arrive when a child feels valued and safe enough to risk hearing the needs of another

Hope is both the earliest and the most indispensable virtue inherent in the state of being alive. If life is to be sustained hope must remain, even where confidence is wounded, trust impaired. (Erikson, 2000, p. 192)

The developmental hope journey continues as language develops and being inextricably linked with cognition, the thought processes for hope, autonomy, future focusing and goal setting are evolving rapidly. The scripts that are being learned are snapshots of the child's worldview and emerging values and belief systems. An example is the gender script that is culturally unique (Snyder, 1994). A traditional Aboriginal point of view is of all life being animate and equal as opposed to dominant or not. There are also the scripts around race and social or gender-based power, or lack of, which are being laid down. This development is as much about the relevance and acceptance of choosing a specific goal as it is about the ability for achievement.

Memory advancement and eventually the ability to reflect and engage in meta-cognition will improve the skills and therefore capacity for achieving life satisfaction through goal achievement that we understand as a hopeful life.

Hope is the enduring belief in the attainability of fervent wishes, in spite of the dark urges and rages which mark the beginning of existence.

Hope is the ontogenetic basis of faith, and is nourished by the adult faith which pervades patterns of care. (Erikson, 1964, p. 118)

This involves Erikson's stage of identity versus role confusion as the child morphs into hopeful and empowered adult or not.

**Death with hope.**

Sadly this is relevant because Lora died after 4 years of valiantly fighting her cancer that went undiagnosed despite repeated visits to her physician complaining of a painful breast lump. It had spread to her spine even before her mastectomy. Kübler-Ross (1997) describes fear of death being universal however Lora had less fear of death for herself but great fear of leaving her son. Her dedication to Stewart Junior kept her hope alive: that she would live long enough for him to retain a memory of her and to know how much she loved him and worked hard to change her life for his future.

Kübler-Ross (1997) describes hope in various forms:

- ✓ hope of some new miracle cure
- ✓ that the illness must have some profound meaning
- ✓ that the experience is just a nightmare and not even real
- ✓ or that they have been chosen to play some significant role for humanity

For Lora, the second certainly played in her mind.

An important point Kübler-Ross (1997) makes is that patients seemed to have the most confidence in the doctors who allowed for hope preventing the mind from freezing in fear. Finding the balance is the complexity we face and leads to considering this as a necessary educational component for professions involving human interaction, especially in facing death or other significant adversity. According to Scioli (2007, in Scioli et al. 2011) all peoples are "sustained by hope: Buddhists, Hindus, and Jews, as well as the followers of Mohammed, the African Ifa, Native

Americans, and the Australian Aborigines draw their “spiritual light” from hope oriented belief systems” (p. 78). Groopman (2004) believes that it is “part of the human spirit to endure and give a miracle a chance to happen” (p. 81). The miracle may well be to have a good death or leave a legacy that has personal value as for Lora through her hopes for her son. Gradually her hope shifted from her own survival to the future she was ensuring for her son by the supports she was able to draw into her life, and therefore his also.

**Reframing: hope in the shadows.**

Lora and her son lived on Vancouver's infamous Downtown East Side (DTES) an area in the cross-fire of gentrification slowly moving eastwards and encroaching on the space of many who have called it home for generations. There is a book and every year a calendar called “Hope in Shadows: Stories and Photographs of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside” ([www.hopeinshadows.com/](http://www.hopeinshadows.com/)). For the last 9 years, 200 disposable cameras have been given out and in 2012, 4,000 images were submitted to a contest for publication in the calendar. The purpose is simply to empower the people of the DTES by sharing the images and lives of the Eastside, revealing their deepest feelings and experiences. The authors say that in some small way it brings hope to the people living in addiction and poverty to know that others may understand just a little, and as long as there is hope there is the possibility of a better life.

As a way of teaching the women in prison about mindfulness and also reframing their stories for a different future and to find hope in the shadow side I used photography. Their task was to find beauty in the “hard courtyard,” a rather dismal concrete enclosure, to learn there is beauty everywhere in a mindful life; you just have

to look and shift your focus. The task was to create images, that when the focal length of the lens was changed, would shift the focus of the picture: an obvious metaphor for changing how you see your world and the personal story you tell.

The following pictures were taken by a woman in 2001 who saw that as she changed her focus she could either see the web or look clearly at her reflection in a mirrored window. Hope is about consciously choosing what to focus on; the barriers or webs that entangle us, or the real object of interest: our healing and ourselves.



*Figure 2. Changing what you focus on.*

Permission for publication has been obtained and use of these photo's encouraged by the woman in the pictures.

### **Hope and activism.**

Lora started a collective of women with incarceration experience called Sisters in Action and Solidarity (SAS); it became a very important part of her journey. She visited the prison every month, many times in extreme pain as she could not take in her medications. The group still comes into the prison monthly sustaining hope by



meeting with women and hearing their ideas, stories, and needs. Valerie Braithwaite (2004) describes this idea of collective hope as “a shared desire for a better society, articulated through a broad set of agreed-upon goals and principles, developed and elaborated through socially inclusive dialogue” (p. 146). Courville and Piper (2011) say that “[t]he role of activist is seen here as keeping up hopes held by grassroots people by translating them into some kind of action” (p. 53). Their stance is that hope without action is unsustainable and that while “these actions can be regarded as hopeless, the fact that they happen can inspire hope even in the direst of contexts” (p. 44). It happens through a process of empowerment, most particularly poignant for prison work. According to V. Braithwaite (2004),

Learned helplessness, disengagement in the face of stress, failures of active coping, and failures of persistence are particularly prevalent among the poor and the oppressed... Emancipation is about freeing people who are weakened by domination so they become strong. (p. 83)

In thinking of oppressed people Freire (2004) has this to say about his process of writing *Pedagogy of Hope*: “it is written in rage and love, without which there is no hope” (p. 4). He certainly communicated his ideas, his rage, and his love to nurture hope in Brazil:

Without a minimum of hope, we cannot so much as start the struggle. But without the struggle, hope, as an ontological need, dissipates, loses its bearings, and turns into hopelessness... Hope as it happens, is so important for our existence, individual and social, that we must take every care not to experience it in a mistaken form... Hopelessness and despair are both the consequences and the cause of inaction or immobilization. (p. 3)

In brief, he is describing the need to empower whilst also building the mechanisms for engagement to keep the action going and the hope alive. “When the private hopes of a Nelson Mandela or a Václav Havel become public hopes and then the collective hopes

of a people, they can lead to the hope-emancipation dynamic” (Drahos, 2004, p. 33). Snyder (2002) points out that “hope theory also may have larger scale applications in reducing risks and inoculating segments of society against despair” (p. 261). There should be a significant driving force in understanding the role of hope in the rehabilitation of prisoners and transformational learning: helping people work against the temptation to despair but rather to see a future with possibility, not simply a historical inevitability of repeating the cycle (Jacobs, 2005).

Power in the world is based on managing and controlling the hope of the people, keeping their attention focused on small things like television and the like so they do not see the real picture of what is happening to their power. As an activist Lora was very focused on nurturing the hope of women in prison through her own freedom and her public presentations.

#### **Individual and interdependent hope.**

One other area needing further clarification is that of the discussion of hope in collective, interdependent versus more independent cultures. It is important to this study because Lora was Aboriginal and strongly connected to the rights and needs of her family and friends. The interdependent cultures promote belonging, occupying one's proper place, and promoting other's goals (Arndt, 2004). Culture in this sense is discussed at the macro level, but culture is also highly influential at the meso and micro levels of society, for example a gang culture promotes interdependency as does an embedded prison code.

Du and King (2013) and Bernardo (2010) sought to understand how hope is founded in different self-construals and more interdependent cultures. The question

was to determine whether hope was anchored within the individual as an internal locus of hope or anchored in a significant other, or through culture which classify as external loci of hope. Du and King (2013) found that how people see themselves exerts a powerful influence on hope. Self-construal is a predictor of how hope manifests in individuals either within oneself or others, however both internal and external loci of hope were positively associated with healthy psychological adjustment. Bernardo (2010) found that there are 4 distinct locus-of-hope dimensions: internal external-family; external-peers, and external spiritual. Therefore hope as goal attainment can be conceptualized through agency drawing on the capacities, resources, and commitments of external agents thus re-conceptualizing trait hope to capture the new agential dimension.

I have been told by some Aboriginal people that hope is not a construct they acknowledge in their teachings and for many this is true. However an Elder told me that *Ihtatihtumown* is hope in Cree and it relates to thinking of the possibility of bearing fruit from this point right now. This led me to the teachings (*nehiyawak*) of Cree Elder Mary Lee ([www.fourdirectionsteachings.com/transcripts/cree.html](http://www.fourdirectionsteachings.com/transcripts/cree.html)). In the section entitled "Tipi Poles" it explains that there are 15 poles creating a Tipi and one of them holds teachings on "HOPE: We must look forward to moving toward good things. We need to have a sense that the seeds we are planting will bear fruit for our children, families and communities." It not only incorporates goal setting but does so incorporating an interdependent view of seeking a positive outcome for all.

**Hope and heart.**

In the case of working with people in crisis, Groopman (2004) says that “hope is the very heart of healing. For those who have hope, it may help them live longer, and it will help all to live better” (p. 211). This following piece from *The Illustrated Magazine of Art* (1853, Volume 1; retrieved from Google Books, [http://books.google.ca/books?id=guxAAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gb\\_s\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.ca/books?id=guxAAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gb_s_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)) seemed too lovely not to have space as it speaks so eloquently to the heart of hope:

There is no nation “that” does not live on hope and desire. There is no existence so miserable that it does not conceal in some obscure corner the small bright light which shines under the heavy weight of all the evils at the bottom of Pandora’s Box.

This allegory of Pandora is one of the most beautiful with which Hope inspired the old poets.... Hope, always young, is, like Love, as old as the world. Another poetical idea of the ancients was making Hope the sister of Sleep, who eases our pains, and of Death, who ends them. (p. 259)

Lora, like many women in prison, wrote poetry, (reproduced as closely as possible to her structure and spelling in Appendix F). Her poetry was about pain but also her hope, and her son Stewart.

**Summary**

This final segment of the literature review sought to understand hope broadly in all the ways we know and talk about it and as it applied to the context of Lora’s transformation. I believe it particularly underlay her first interaction with the warden who shared a belief in the human potential for change and growth, which sparked Lora’s asking the Creator who she should work with. It was also significant in my relationship with Lora in that I also absolutely believe in the possibility for all people

in prison to grow and flourish, to be drug and crime free, thereby attempting to hold hope for women in prison until they can hold it for themselves. Lora reinforced this hopeful belief in me by her growth and development, leading to *desistance* and restoration. Hope was foundational to her courage as she navigated the cancer treatments always hopeful the pain and suffering was worth it to beat the cancer. With the knowledge that she would die and leave her son a form of collective or interdependent hope emerged to re-focus her hope on his future and what he would achieve for his people. Hope supported her resilience and, as the interviews divulged, her relationships with others. Mentors, volunteers, and peer supporters all have the ability to nurture and reinforce hope simply by their presence and because of their shared and different life experiences. Her courage and determination have helped many find their agency and look for a pathway to their life goals that is honest and healthy.

Here is the hope that people in supportive or helping professions can assist their client/patient in re-storying their memories to create new neural pathways and build hope (Four Arrows, et al. 2010; Siegel, 1999, 2011). Hope grows where we seek success and look to the future and is the connection to the new frontier of neuroplasticity exploring how our experiences in life can shape and re-shape our brains. There is a great deal more to learn of this complex, contagious, cognition and critical human emotion.

### **System Interaction**

This discussion is not only about recognizing the systemic and holistic nature of healing, human growth, and development but also how the systems the person has to

interact with in the physical world will nurture or repress that growth and development. According to Campbell (1985) "all are related in a vast complexity of cycles within cycles. There are sometimes contingent disruptions where the cogs of interacting cycles don't mesh but there is a preponderant determinism that pervades all" (p. 9). He goes on to say that this deterministic order is intelligent and there is an underlying structure common to all phenomena. He believes we all share the same biological structure, down to the genetic language of the DNA and even to the chemical make-up of our cells sharing the same chemical elements with the universe. This, he says, is "the system' because there is no other system possible. It embraces all of the possibilities to experience. What are normally called systems are surface fragments of 'the system'" (p. 10).

According to Macy (1991), systems theory is not a theory as such, in that it is not a single hypothesis "about a given set of phenomena, so much as a coherent set of principles applying to all irreducible wholes ... common principles and properties that are amenable to understanding when we view them as self-organizing systems" (p. 3). What this gives us is a set of principles to view the dynamics and characteristics of systems. This is vital to the discussion, because through our presuppositions, our worldview, and conceptualizations based on a given set of principles, we will be influenced in every action and enterprise of our lives.

Pearce (2005) agrees that systems theory is

not so much an area of study as a way of thinking that can be applied to any area of study including but not limited to 'macro' theories of human societies and communities.... a way of thinking about the events and objects of our social worlds, and of acting into them with a particular set of intellectual resources. (p. 50)

It could be described as a map of the main potential routes for a journey to answer a question or solve a mystery. However life, nature, and human beings will show you the byways through the beauty, the hidden clues, and treasures and may even end in a different destination and almost certainly with a new question and another mystery. For thousands of years the North American Indigenous people have lived in harmony with nature within a framework taught through the sacred circle for many. An understanding formed through experience and the spirit of the natural cycles, systems, and rhythms of mother-nature and nurturing hope for the future.

### **Summary of the Literature Review**

The theories covered form the complex structure overarching the seeking of relief and freedom from trauma that has caused socially and personally painful lives. It is far from simple and I can only recruit the language and theories that are available to me which may be very different from the language Lora would have used. However there is an instinctive drive in all healthy human beings to make meaning and seek knowledge and truth in our interactions with the world (Taylor, 2008). For those so traumatized and frozen in fear by emotional abuse and or physical violence, the sincere hope is to spark a re-ignition of this drive. For this to happen multiple factors need to be in place, and although unique for each individual, there are some that are more common for all.

Transformative learning (TL) and hope are the most significant theories of this review with multiple others in a supporting role. The waypower in hope theory is the change in transformational learning where Lora shifted from anti-social forms of waypower to pro-social routes in achieving her goals. The initial interviews for the

pilot project and the knowledge from my relationship with Lora support the importance of the topics and theories described so far.



### **CHAPTER THREE: Methodology and Methods (Modes of Inquiry)**

This chapter describes the culture of inquiry, the methodological framework, and the philosophical underpinnings recruited to answer the research question: Why and how did Lora change the habitually criminal and violent lifestyle she had led for the first 30 years of her life? The participant selection criteria for the pilot and dissertation study will be outlined and finally, the data analysis procedure and evaluation process. Due to the nature of this study, however, it begins with a personal reflection and examination of my responsibilities in undertaking the project. As stated by Wilson (2008), there must be recognition that the source of any research project “begins in the heart/mind of the researcher and ‘checking your heart’ is a critical element of the research process” (p. 60). “*Research is a ceremony*” (Wilson, 2008, p. 69) and every ceremony must involve the preparation of setting the stage.

#### **Personal Reflection**

The heart of this study sought to understand the emancipatory learning process of people with complex trauma histories who engage in maladaptive solutions to assuage their distress: Particularly those whose solutions lead to criminal activity and health-destructive behaviours. This *mindful* inquiry is a synthesis of several intellectual traditions and philosophical underpinnings: phenomenology, hermeneutics, critical social science, and Buddhism (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). It paid significant attention to Indigenous epistemology and the wisdom of Elders. Research is not a disembodied, programmed activity but is exquisitely connected to the way we engage with the world and to personal and intellectual development (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). Scholarly inquiry requires the examination of personal involvement, biases, assumption systems,

and any other factors that influence the procedures, methods, and decisions made during the course of the study.

The speaker's social, emotional, and educational location is epistemically salient and neutrality, if achievable, can never be sustained, according to Alcoff (1991). For all of these reasons conscious attention through reflexivity is paid to interpretation and the construction of understanding as it develops. The process of ongoing reflection and reflexivity is discussed in depth later in this chapter. I will identify where and how my personal philosophy meets the approaches necessary to be respectful within this study of an Anishinaabe woman's life.

It is unlikely that Lora's story would have come to the attention of anyone who was not intimately known to her and certainly not as such a good example of someone who changed her life from addicted and violent criminal to productive citizen and devoted parent. Normally when a person leaves prison his or her existing relationships with staff are severed for reasons of safety and perceived professionalism. However, this leaves the research of lives post incarceration to those who may journey with an ex-prisoner in the community, but is unlikely to have knowledge of both stages of their life, custodial and free. To have worked closely with Lora through both is an unusual position and privilege from which to explore her unique story and attempt to understand her healing and change process.

Another question I considered deeply is my position as a White woman to tell this story and from it try to identify the foundations of hope, transformation, and other factors of a traditional Anishinaabe woman in growing beyond early life trauma that had resulted in addiction and crime. Lora had repeatedly pressed me to write her story,

and base my dissertation upon it and so the legitimacy question does not rest within our relationship; in fact, she tasked me, and therefore I had a responsibility to tell it. My concern is in consideration of, and with respect for, the frequent misinterpretation and misrepresentation of Indigenous knowledge, experience and wisdom in the past by non-Aboriginal writers and researchers (Smith, 1999; Rigney, 1999; Wilson, 2001a, 2001b; Weber-Pillwax, 2001, Steinhauer, 2002). I spent considerable time learning about Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies described in detail further in this chapter, a learning journey that is ongoing and rich. All I can offer is a pledge to be sensitive, transparent, and respectful and remember to ask for support and direction often.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe qualitative researchers as makers of quilts or as bricoleurs, piecing together the various “aesthetic and material tools of his or her craft” (p. 4), deploying the various methods and methodologies in a “do-it-yourself” assembly, chosen in relation to the question. Janesick (2000) describes qualitative research as choreography, “in terms of situating and re-contextualizing the research project within the shared experience of the researcher and the participants in the study” (p. 380). She goes on to describe research as art by referencing Dewey who believed that art is about communication and experience. In their application of narrative inquiry Clandinin and Connelly (2000) are also strongly influenced by Dewey’s writing on the nature of experience, which he saw as both personal and social. People as individuals need to be understood within their relationships and always within a social context. This is important to my study in that while exploring Lora’s healing journey, it existed within her Indigenous way of being in the world, founded on a

difficult childhood, and within the contexts of the institutional and social systems she had to negotiate: those systems being primarily youth, and adult justice systems, the ministry of Child and Family, the community at large, and finally, the medical system.

The following pages will briefly outline the research methodologies, philosophies, and modes of inquiry that I have collected as tenets and guideposts in the choreography of this qualitative research design. As I progressed in developing this study the layers upon layers of complexity to this project led me through a dance with multiple perspectives and approaches.

### **Reflexivity**

A personal reflexive practice is both an ongoing continuous process and I believe should be a regularly scheduled specific and overarching self-interrogative check-in. It is a process of acknowledging the role of the researcher actively identifying the impact and influences of our subjective nature and worldview on the research project. Epistemological reflexivity requires that every choice made in the development and execution of a research project from the methodologies, tools, methods, or modes of inquiry are recognized as laden with the worldviews and tacit theories, epistemological positions, and assumptions of the developers (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003; Ryan, 2005; Kirby, Greaves & Reid, 2006). Situating ourselves socially and emotionally in relation to participants is an important aspect of reflexivity practice.

While developing a narrative I, as the gatherer of the stories, play a role in the generation of that narrative. Either capturing my own story or my presence influencing the narrator and when checking back about the data, how I recount the story can influence the teller to agree to my account without realizing an unintentional

subtle or nuanced perspective shift. Most statements, stories, or texts are understood through a complex interpersonally negotiated process of interpretation. Clarity can only be achieved with constant attention to the semantic quality of all words and phrases used as language seeking to uncover implicit meaning in personal voice (Ryan, 2005).

A research journal, project file, or field notes should record the struggles and reflections on the thoughts, decisions, rationales, and ideas of each step along the way. The researcher's intellectual and emotional response to the participants' narrative can be a significant source of knowledge also. Locating one's research activity openly and transparently within the same framework and social world as the phenomena being studied is the ideal and the capacity sought from reflexivity. Researchers must appreciate the power dynamics and political influences in all stages of the project, from the questions asked or discarded to whose responses are included in the data and who is left out, and then following through to analysis approach and writing style. Any process of doubling back such as validation interviews or member checking, focus groups and so forth, will help in asking the question: "did I get it right?" (Kirby et al., 2006; Byrne, Canavan, & Millar, 2009). At no stage of the research was it more important to be vigilant than in the analysis stage. Following are some of the paradigms and philosophies that informed my approach beginning with feminism.

### **Feminism**

Feminism, although diverse and complex, has significantly influenced the social sciences along with other critical approaches, by challenging the positivist position and opening the discussions of knowledge as being socially constructed. A founding

premise of this paradigm is that particularly women but also people of colour, poor socio-economic status, and those with disabling conditions have been denied a voice in the development of *scientific understanding*. Western feminism has challenged not only the existing knowledge but also epistemology, the science of how knowledge can be understood. However it is not value neutral and has been challenged by women of colour as conforming to some fundamental Western European values and attitudes towards the “other” and the erroneous belief that all women share universal characteristics and suffer universal forms of oppression (Smith, 1999).

Indigenous women believe that oppression takes many forms and that there are interlocking relationships between race, gender, and class making the debate complex sociologically and psychologically. They “hold an analysis of colonialism as a key tenet of indigenous feminism” seeking nothing less than a full restoration of women to their traditional roles, rights and responsibilities (Smith, 1999). According to Briskin (1994), feminism as a worldview promotes the understanding of the systemic character of oppression while shifting the focus from victimization to agency and the ability to change the systems.

There is a contradiction between two of the principles that are fundamental to feminist research; firstly, the commitment to listen to women on their own terms and the recognition that it is the researcher who ultimately shapes the entire research process and product (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). A feminist approach to research will consider and incorporate the secular, social, political, contextual, and capitalist ideologies, recognizing them as issues and causes of oppression. This awareness is important for knowledge construction and social justice awareness to aid in

emancipation and empowerment of the participants and those they represent (Paliadelis & Cruickshank, 2008; Syed, 2010).

### **Phenomenology**

Initially I had described this project without declaring myself in the concept draft, but was advised that I simply could not leave myself out as I am so intimately engaged with the phenomenon of interest through my work and especially the main character of this story. “[P]henomenological research strives for empathic generalizability” (Hansen & Charlton, 2013, p. 65) It is the study of lived experience or the life world, the world as lived by a person, not the world or reality as something separate from the person (Lavery, 2003). To accomplish this Husserl believed it important for researchers to bracket themselves out and suspend judgment of their biases and beliefs about the phenomenon being studied (Bayer, 2013).

Lavery (2003), states that Gadamer viewed bracketing as impossible and that a person cannot leave his or her knowledge and historicity of understanding by simply adopting a different attitude in the present. Conversely he believed these positions can play a positive role in the search for meaning.

### **Hermeneutics**

Hermeneutics is a way to interrogate the deepest conditions of symbolic interaction and culture and resides in our understanding of the parts hinging on our understanding of a larger whole, which, again, can only be understood on the basis of the parts. Heidegger transformed the discipline of hermeneutics believing it to be about the most fundamental conditions of man's being in the world; it is about ontology (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2013). Heidegger's concept of the hermeneutic circle

refers to the interplay between our self-understanding, our understanding of the world and others; it involves openness towards the fact that what seems rational, true, or coherent may cover something deeply unfamiliar.

This discussion is particularly pertinent when contemplating the interpretation of life experiences and belief systems of people, mainly women of a very different culture to my own. A people who, according to McPherson and Rabb (2011), have deeply internalized the dominant culture's "prejudices against their own people and hence against themselves" (p. 200). This happened long before they were old enough to understand and resist.

Philosophical hermeneutics recognizes that it is impossible to avoid bringing one's prejudgments into the interpretation but rather permits the confrontation of those subjective prejudices with the story, document, work of art, or culture, creating a kind of "dialogue or conversation with a living text" (p. 203). This dialogue moves back and forth modified and modifying our pre-understandings, becoming more aware of biases and distortions, until reaching a common understanding of what is agreed to and what is not, what is known and unknowable.

Van Manen (1990) for example, explains that it is easy to know a teacher, we all have a notion of what a teacher is; however, it is more complicated to come to a "reflective determination and explication of what a teacher is" (p. 77). In this same light, people are quick to believe they know what an offender is, but to explain who they are and how they change to becoming an ex-offender is far from simple. Laverty (2003), in describing Gadamer's expansion of Heidegger's work, denies the possibility of a definitive interpretation and so an interpretivist framework of inquiry led this



study to seek the multiple experiences of Lora through her relationships and with her particular construction of reality that guided her life journey.

In comparing two paradigms of thought Barton (2004) reveals the potential integration of the hermeneutic circle and the Aboriginal sacred circle as complementary ways to think about a circular process of relational understanding. The hermeneutic circle is a process to reveal knowledge of our cultural and historical experiences and move between the parts and the whole building an interpretation of human beings. Barton (2004) also refers to Gadamer in using the hermeneutic circle to describe the relationship that reveals something new from something familiar by taking different angles of perception. It is the study of relational issues embedded in everyday activities by merging the horizon of the interpreted and the interpreter to build a shared, co-created understanding of a new horizon. The sacred circle is a major paradigm of Aboriginal thought about holism, circularity, and well-being with recognition of the importance of unity from physical, mental, and spiritual perspectives.

### **Critical Social Science**

Critical social science pays attention to political, social, economic, technological, and psychological barriers seeking truth in power-saturated environments and deep structures of domination. What sets it apart from other cultures of inquiry is the insistence on comprehending the phenomenon not in isolation but within its context and how the intersections and interactions with the historical and social systems inform reciprocal influences.

The focus of a critical social science inquiry is set firmly on emancipation, increasing human autonomy and deepening consciousness. Vital to the story is the identification of the prevailing ideology and the political rhetoric about criminals beyond rehabilitation. It is relevant for this study in bringing awareness to the loss of belief in the potential for the personal healing of prisoners and highlighting the social structures and supports necessary to assist in the growth of individual towards desisting from drug use and crime (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). Explaining this phenomenon of change may be a long-term goal and somewhat idealistic without broad radical social change, however if this belief can be communicated to individuals engaged in this transformative process then freedom will emerge one person at a time.

### **Buddhism**

The Buddhist aspect of *mindful* inquiry as described by Bentz and Shapiro (1998) brings to awareness my own illusions, constructions and needs from this or any other research I might be involved in. Heidegger (in Lavery, 2003) refers to historicity and pre-understanding as cultural learning from birth and even handed down generationally; researcher *situatedness* must be understood before embarking on such a project as this. Cellular memories also support the importance of considering the grounding and presumptions of prior knowledge. We cannot be completely aware of the influences from our past, even our distant past (Lipton, 2005; Steinhauer, 2002). The late Dr. Lionel Kinunwa (quoted in Steinhauer, 2002) firmly believed that memories are stored in our cells; he talked of 10,000 year old experiences and that “our ancestral memories are in our blood, they’re in our bones, they’re in our hair” (p.

76). Today we are learning the truth in this old wisdom through the study of epigenetics.

### **Indigenous Research Paradigm**

Aboriginal sensitivity in research approaches requires a commitment to all relationships, with people, nature, places, and the cosmos. Ideally there should be no conflict between my ways of being and doing as the researcher with the nature of those also invested in the project. I attended to building respectful relationships with all ideas that I studied and will study (Wilson, 2008). It is also necessary for the research to add value to the community and the knowledge gained must not be considered the sole possession of the researcher and must be used in concert with an organic grounding (Four Arrows et al., 2010). Indigenous ways of collecting and finding out things are searching, harvesting, picking, gathering, hunting, and trapping. Research can be understood as a “search and gathering pursuit; to re-search is simply to look again” (Absolon, 2008, p. 16).

There is debate in the international Indigenous scholarly community about who should conduct research on Aboriginal questions (Steinhauer, 2002; Wilson, 2001a). While many believe that non-Aboriginal people should not be engaged in research with Indigenous peoples, Coram (2011) opens the debate to the potential value of an “outsider” to harness un-obscured insight. Similarly, Simmel (in Wolf, 1976) put forward the notion of the objective individual surveying, unhampered by commitments, with less prejudice and writing from a position of open curiosity. Weber-Pilwax (2001) does not, however, agree in stating that “nobody can be objective in the true sense of being objective and detached” (p. 171) and Smith (1999)

would caution this as a possible reason for the perpetuation of research by outsiders. From a constructivist position I attempted to achieve an interaction between myself, the investigator, and Lora the subject while recognizing that on many levels our understandings were made up of socially constructed realities: some that we shared and many that we did not but attempted to interpret for each other.

According to Smith (1999) Indigenous research recognizes multiple ways to be either an insider or outsider researcher where “the critical issue with insider research is the constant need for reflexivity” (p. 137). In the case of my role in this study, I was an outsider as a non-Aboriginal person but an insider due to the relationship with Lora and some members of her family, most importantly her son. I was also an insider from my time spent inside the prison, although not as an inmate but engaging daily with women and observing their prison existence.

Weber-Pillwax (2001) believes that regardless of who the researcher is, Indigenous or not, the following principles must be considered:

- ✓ The interconnectedness of all living things
- ✓ The impact of motives and intentions on person and community
- ✓ The foundation of research as lived Indigenous experience
- ✓ The groundedness of theories in Indigenous epistemology
- ✓ The transformative nature of research
- ✓ The sacredness and the responsibility of maintaining personal and  
community integrity
- ✓ The recognition of languages and cultures as living processes
- ✓ That knowledge is relational with all of creation

(Weber-Pillwax, 2001; Wilson, 2001b).

Graham Smith, a Maori academic (as cited in Smith, 1999), has also developed four models by which culturally sensitive, empathic, and appropriate research can be undertaken by non-Aboriginal researchers.

The first is a model based on a mentoring role, whereby authoritative Indigenous people guide and sponsor the research. The second model involves the incorporation of the researcher into the daily lives of the community and the building of a life-long relationship extending beyond the time and scope of the study. Thirdly, he describes a power-sharing model where the researcher seeks assistance from the community to support the development and following through of the project. Finally, is an empowerment model that the research addresses a question of importance to the community. Smith (1999) summarizes that in all cases Indigenous people are involved in key roles and that the non-Indigenous researchers can still be in the role of mentors. This study falls under the second and third models.

In essence, could I be the perfect person to explore Lora's story, knowing the last 14 years of her life so well, or would my involvement in her life be a barrier to my interpretation of the data? What specifically has changed in me through my own acculturation process since engaging with Aboriginal people? These are not questions searching for answers but sensitivities that will not be forgotten now or in the future.

Wilson (2001b) shares his conceptualization of an Indigenous research paradigm as a set of beliefs that go together to guide a researcher's actions and beliefs about the world and gaining knowledge. The paradigm is made up of three parts: ontology as the beliefs about the nature of reality, epistemology which is how to think about that

reality and axiology which is the set of ethics and morals and the methodology which relates to the ways of thinking to gain more knowledge of the phenomenon. It is about relational accountability, as a researcher, answering to all the relations, the world around and fulfilling roles and obligations. The approach is holistic and inductive with the intention to “successfully transform human social systems so they can be sustainable for the future” (Four Arrows et al, 2010, p. xi).

### **Ontology.**

Similar to constructivism, Indigenous ontology believes there are multiple realities that are socially constructed; truth is not a fixed point, but constantly evolving, a point of balance, “perpetually created and perpetually new” (Four Arrows et al, 2010, p. 115). According to Hart (2010), there is an inter-relationship between ontology and worldview. “How people see the world will influence their understanding of what exists, and vice-versa” (p. 7). Ontology is asking what is real: a question that has no definitive answer. The truth is not external, something out there; reality is in the relationship one has with that truth (Wilson, 2008).

### **Epistemology.**

Epistemology is the study of the nature of thinking or knowledge and is based in relationships, not just with people, objects, or the cosmos, but also with ideas and concepts (Wilson, 2001b, 2008). The power and importance of these intuitive, experiential, reality, and land-based ways of knowing lies in that they are created within local systems. Choices about ontology are made dependant on personal thinking processes and how the world is known and understood.

**Axiology.**

Weber-Pillwax (2001) discusses the personal integrity of the researcher as the basis for contextualizing oneself within all living systems and the planet. If compromised in any way it leaves the individual outside of the system leading to isolation and ultimately destruction and a loss of all necessary supports for survival. Research must be of some benefit to the world and lead to some action *out there*; information worthy of searching for (Cajete, 2000; Coram, 2011; Weber Pillwax, 2001; Wilson, 2001a, 2008). As I learned more about the ethics and morality of Indigenous researchers, built upon relational accountability in Wilson (2008), I also learnt more about Lora and how she understood the contours of right and wrong based on natural laws.

**Methodology.**

As the principal researcher for this study I adopted an iterative approach commensurate with Aboriginal teaching styles as described in the section on Foundations of Indigenous Ways of Knowing. The participants were seen as co-researchers, as demonstrated by returning to the interviewees and not only checking my assumptions of their meaning but also the overarching themes and knowledge being uncovered. Indigenous methodology means talking about relational accountability, being accountable to all my relations (Wilson, 2001a, 2008). Dr. McPherson invited me to meet with him at Lakehead University where he is a professor and has a project to describe Indigenous philosophy. His main advice to me about the data collection and analysis was “keep it simple and let the stories tell you their truth” (D. McPherson, personal communication, August 26, 2013).

**Story.**

Within this study the meaning of story is that as defined within the phenomenological paradigm (Barton, 2004). Phenomenology is about listening to the storied descriptions of a person's subjective world, what it is like for them. It requires trying to understand this as closely to their terms and experiences as possible without placing our judgments and preconceived notions on their lived experience. In hermeneutic phenomenology "stories" are the components of the life narratives told to convey the meaning of the lived experience; intended by the narrator for the listener to take away and to understand what is otherwise hidden or taken for granted.

Mauthner and Doucet (1998) explain that stories take place within a social context and are not true for all time or in all spaces. They introduce Plummer who so eloquently says "that we 'coax' stories and listen with an open mind and an open heart to this person and her/his story, both of which are ever-changing and continually constituted in relationships" (p. 21). Sarris (1993) notes also, that stories are often shared by moving in and out of time frames, not in chronological order and often implicating the listener. Plummer's manifesto for stories on his personal website (<http://kenplummer.com/manifestos/a-manifesto-for-stories/>) tells that they weave and interconnect creating a vast inter-textual panorama, and they are the keys to the emplotment, which is the ordering and unlocking of complexities and flows of unique human lives such as Lora's. He goes on to discuss building narrative bridges which he says,

can be scientific, aesthetic, pragmatic and practical, imaginative, hermeneutic, personal and subjective, and even spiritual. We need science to help us see the real; aesthetics to help us see the beautiful; pragmatism to help us see the consequences



of our ideas; imagination to help us push horizons and break boundaries; reflexivity to locate and ponder our own relation to it all; spirituality to help us foster wider connections to nature and to the pluriverse; and wisdom to help us tie it all together. (Section 3)

This is the broad richness and complexity of narrative and that in the construction of the stories of experiences there is a reflexive relationship between living a “life story, telling a life story, retelling a life story, and reliving a life story” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 71). According to Lipton and Bhaerman (2009), “we humans live and die by our stories. We are a meaning-making species, and the meaning we make becomes as important as the life itself” (p. 43). Todorova (2007) also brings attention to what is not said which perhaps is too painful to be spoken, too dangerous to be shared, but wants and needs to be heard. The interpretation of what is not explicitly voiced is a serious dilemma and responsibility for the researcher, addressed in more depth in the data analysis section.

Within Cree tradition there are three levels of storytelling. There are sacred stories with a specific form and structure. They can only be told by Elders and hold the history of a people and will be shared in a way that is determined according to the level, age or sophistication of the listener. The second level holds the myths and Indigenous legends, holding the morals, lessons, and events of life. Thirdly stories relate the personal experiences often used to share an underlying message to help counsel or teach (Wilson, 2008).

### **Narrative Inquiry**

A narrative inquiry in the exploration of trauma recovery will find no singular truth or absolute interpretation but the flexibility within the method can capture the rich

detail, complexities, and diverse experiences of the participants, in this case those who observed Lora's healing journey including myself (Hall, 2010). According to Rogers (2003), it is not unusual for qualitative researchers to be involved in long-term relationships with participants, and that it may span both a social and research relationship within a particular context. Clandinin and Huber (2010) state, that narrative inquirers cannot subtract themselves from the inquiry relationship. Narrative and Indigenous researchers do not seek or assume objectivity, which as previously stated would be difficult if not impossible for me to achieve with such familiarity (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003; Steinhauer, 2002).

Laverty (2003) states that in a phenomenological or hermeneutic phenomenological study the relationship is central to building the necessary trust for safety and the sharing of rich detail in unique stories; this is also consistent with a feminist approach (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). Part of the data collected was based on the lived experience of those in relationship with Lora early in her life. Through their stories I found clues to her courage and resiliency assets, characteristics, temperaments, and personality traits. Todorova (2007) believes that identities are not necessarily inside people but created through relationship and between people; this is important when I consider the shift in the people Lora chose to be in relationship with, from anti-social, gang, and street-entrenched individuals toward supportive and pro-social individuals. I do not include members of her family in the first description, many of whom were pro-social and tried to guide her in a different direction early in her life. Through our journey together I came to understand some of the ways Lora made sense of the world and some of the motivations for her behaviour in the latter years and paradoxically

came to understand myself and the world we inhabited together with more clarity and texture.

This project was a qualitative study and concentrated narrative inquiry, collecting and organizing the rich and descriptive story of the developmental influences from her childhood and the latter relationships important in her healing transformation.

Narrative research has a temporal quality bringing together in this case the span of a lifetime and the spiritual, cognitive, affective, somatic, personal, and social dimensions. People are natural storytellers, revealing and also discovering themselves in the process while also shaped by the audience (Clandinin & Huber, 2010; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Rogers, 2003). Collecting data via story and personal narrative fits well with a study involving Aboriginal people as it builds relationship, not only between the interviewer and storyteller, but also relationship between the researcher and the story. There are several ways to analyse narrative data and the approach of Lieblich et al (1998) is described in the data analysis section.

### **Three-dimensional narrative inquiry space.**

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discuss Geertz who “reminds us that it is impossible to look at one event of one time without seeing the event or time nested within the wholeness of his metaphorical parade” (p. 16). The following terms help us to structure the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space as we learn to “see ourselves located somewhere along the dimensions of time, place, the personal and the social” (p. 63). Barton (2004) has broken this into the following subsections:

***Interaction – personal and social.***

Oral narratives, traditional for many Aboriginal people, are formulated through representation, connection, story, and art bringing forth understanding through personal and social interactions. The purpose is to expose a world that builds bridges to new interpretations and knowledge helping to establish the boundaries of identities and cultural life. Van Manen's (1990) *relationality* describes this interpersonal space where we share communication by our words and equally importantly the nuances of our body language.

***Continuity – past, present, and future.***

Narratives connect the past, present, and future (Hansen & Charlton, 2013). They describe our way of being in the world as we look forward in youth and reflect more frequently in our older years all the while trying to create a coherent understanding of events and experiences (Van Manen, 1990; Todorova, 2007). Here we are discussing subjective time, the time that speeds up with enjoyment or slows down during anxiety. Much is revealed in the places of discontinuity and disorder in a story.

***Situation – place.***

When telling stories from her childhood Lora always gave great detail of the terrain, the season, and the safety or fear that she felt in a place. For example, mentioning which of the four directions the pathways went from her house, her belief was that it is impossible to get lost in the bush. If the bush is your home then you are never lost, she would say. Van Manen (1990) describes this as felt space; although rarely consciously reflected upon it is the space that affects the way we feel. Sensitivity to this was

important in deciding where to have the conversations and also exploring this as part of the rich detail important to creating the portrait of Lora's life.

Van Manen (1990) would add one further; that of corporeality, the notion of *lived body*, referring to the "phenomenological fact that we are always bodily in this world" (p. 101). In this physical body we are always revealing and concealing something about ourselves, consciously or not. When we are the subjects of another person's gaze we may lose our naturalness or gain from the positive attention of that other. Lora lived in drab, oversized men's clothing, cringing at the attention of a male, seeking to hide her natural beauty that sadly had been the cause of danger and abuse for much of her life.

### **Case Study / Life History**

Shifting back to a western approach and recognizing the complexity of synthesizing the ancient and the modern, my attempt was to weave these two together in story-ing the life history of one woman that rested in the relationships with many people drawn into her journey. The definition of life history varies depending on disciplinary perspectives, methods, or theoretical vantage points. According to Tierney (2000), it can be described as a culturally produced artifact or an interpretive document. In this study it is a portrait of an individual and a form of biographical research that gathered extremely rich, in-depth information of the experiences, roles, and motivations of the subject's social life (Berg, 2007). According to Rosenwald (2003), the purpose of life history studies is

to scrutinize a single life history in detail so as to comprehend how early experiences gave shape to later developments and how different facets of a life cohere. In this day, when interest in cultural diversity runs high, many also want to

go beyond the mere observation of normative differences and ask how the culture “gets into” the individual. (p. 137)

Case studies “may also be useful for investigating how an individual or program changes over time, perhaps as the result of certain circumstances or interventions” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p. 137).

There are two approaches to exploring life histories, according to Rosenwald (2003); firstly, a comprehensive study based on two main questions: What is this person like, and how did he or she become this person? The second approach is more focused as with this particular study. It scrutinizes an aspect or phenomenon of a person's life that is unique, puzzling, paradoxical, exaggerated, irrational, or inconsistent. Problematic life patterns usually express more than one prevailing tendency activated by contemporaneous conditions with each one having its own developmental history. Transformational phases and turning points in the life must be brought to visibility from the story, and through the analysis, revealing something valuable about the interesting adult pattern of behaviour. This development and description, supported by life-historical detail, must follow a plausible and coherent pathway to construct the fabric from which the meaning of certain events, actions, and episodes can be interpreted.

Lora's life history is a complex system of factors, being a combination of psychological, social, physiological, cultural, historical, and other determinants that influenced the course of her journey: a trajectory that took her through multiple social systems from child welfare to criminal justice and finally palliative care.

According to Stake (2000), this research fits the description of an intrinsic case study as the value is in the interest of Lora's life itself. It could also be considered an instrumental case study as the story plays the role of supporting the focus in understanding factors in trauma, resiliency, healing, and *desistance* (Berg, 2007). The intention is for this study to build foundations and insights that could lead to a collective case study of many women who have achieved life transformation and emancipation from the criminal justice system otherwise known as *desistance* (Berg, 2007; Maruna, 2001).

## **Methods**

### **Developing my Research Question**

According to Josselson and Lieblich (2003), a research question for a narrative study must be stated as one that invites inquiry without the request for a definitive answer. It is conceived as a focus of inquiry, dynamic in nature; a phenomena to be explored naïvely and calling for "articulation and elucidation or a space that has not been sufficiently filled in" (p. 265). My overarching question was focused generally on female prisoners who recover from lives entrapped by addiction and crime; the irreducible differences of each person's journey will hold clues to assisting other women in the future. My question specifically for this study was, Why and how did Lora change the habitually criminal and violent lifestyle she had led for the first 30 years of her life?

- ✓ What can be learned from her early life to understand the relationships she formed and their impact on her development of strengths and challenges?
- ✓ What other factors underlie the resiliency that Lora demonstrated?

- ✓ What supported Lora's belief in the possibility for change?
- ✓ What did each storyteller experience on their journey with Lora?

Lora left to me multiple journals, poetry, and other documents for this purpose, some of which are included in the data, along with two video recordings and many audio recordings of her talking about her life.

**Purposeful conversations.**

Pilot: In maintaining sensitivity to the Anishinaabeg interviewees, I began by telling them about myself and why my relationship with Lora has led to this study (Smith, 1999; Steinhauer, 2002; Weber-Pillwax, 2001). In setting up situations conducive to a hermeneutic interview Van Manen (1990), states "There is a conversational relation between the speakers, and the speakers are involved in a conversational relation with the notion or phenomenon that keeps the personal relation of the conversation intact" (p. 98). I invited her friends and relatives to share their own connections to her and what they know of her childhood development and information about family members that played a significant role in her life from birth.

Listening deeply and openly was vital to this process, and allowing time for the story to meander and unfold was necessary for the comfort of the storyteller and completeness of his or her contribution. I asked specific questions to gain concrete descriptions of Lora's actions or interactions, asking for descriptions of scenes and events that the interviewee was privy to. There were stories of her violence, her kindness, as a child and mother and so forth. This form of what Weber-Pillwax (2001) refers to as purposeful conversation as opposed to interviewing, elicits data that highlights how people make sense of the complexities and subtleties of their own



world and especially the meaning attributed to their shared experiences with Lora.

The questions gained information about cultural, historical, and social resources that were both supportive and destructive in her life.

A complication or perhaps a gift to the process of analyzing these texts or verbal accounts was the language differences. Although the interviews were conducted in English, the Anishinaabeg language that has had influence on the family members is based on a verb-rich and a descriptive of function, style of explaining life, people, and activities. It was necessary to pay particular attention to this during the full data analysis. The conversational interviews were unstructured and informal, to avoid stripping the storytellers of their story (Gergen & Davies, 2003) and valuable for gaining emergent and longitudinal data for case studies or life histories (Kirby, Greaves, & Reid, 2006).

I suspended as much as possible my own relationship allowing each interviewee's connection with Lora to stand in its own truth. These multiple perceptions of relationship with Lora serve to enrich the interpretation of her relational profile and help to clarify meaning by identifying the differences as well as similarities (Stake, 2000). As such, the data could be divided into two separate analyses, one of the structural, concrete details (the what of her life) and one of the experiential, relational details (the why and how).

**Question to initiate and frame the personal stories.**

I began the conversational interviews by asking the participants to reminisce about their relationship with Lora and what they know of her life story. I have photographs of Lora which I believed would help to bring her to awareness within the interview; it

was not necessary for the any of the interviews. I had questions such as those listed below to prompt for more information.

- ✓ How did you know Lora?
- ✓ What do you know of any particular stage of her life?
- ✓ Can you recall a story that is an example of your relationship, her typical behavior, humour, or anything that seems significant about her?
- ✓ Who was there?
- ✓ What were the circumstances?
- ✓ Where did it take place?
- ✓ When did it happen?
- ✓ Why was it so important?
- ✓ What characteristics did she have that stand out for you?
- ✓ Was there anyone who was particularly important to Lora?

### **Recruitment.**

I contacted one member of the family and from there had more people than I could possibly connect with. For the second part I had contact with many people who knew her in and after prison. Lora made it well known that it was her desire for me to tell her story.

### **Implementation of the Project**

#### **Preparation to go to Thunder Bay.**

A significant part of the preparation was focused on my emotional self. I wanted to be grounded in my purpose and perhaps to be prepared for rejection or resentment of my probing into the history of this family. I tried to think about everything, including

the choice of the gifts I should bring. According to the Lakota Elder advising me, generosity is highly valued amongst Aboriginal people and demonstrated by gift giving. I wanted to bring a gift that was personally meaningful.

I made soap from natural ingredients and scented it with lavender oil. Lavender is sometimes used in smudge along with other herbs but never alone and is prized for its calming properties. Smudging is the practice of burning herbs to produce smoke that is then used to bathe and cleanse the body and senses. I used various molds with Celtic designs and one that has the figure of a female goddess form. I was concerned that this might trigger sexual abuse memories or be seen as inappropriate. I had plenty of soaps but took these ones along as well and need not have worried as this design was chosen by most women. One aunt said it felt like a statement of strength and reclaiming female power. I placed the soap in bags along with lavender flowers and cedar picked from my garden. Cedar is also used in smudge for purification and to attract positive energy and is less available in Ontario.

Lora had advised many times to carry tobacco when I travelled and her partner reminded me of the importance of this and that it would help me to be received in a good way. I chose a hotel close to where many of the family live, with rooms large enough to do interviews that would not feel awkward; knowing that I would be interviewing women this felt safe, quiet, and appropriate. I did not offer any remuneration for the interviews as I wanted only those interested in this project for its own merits and as it turned out no one asked and I could have interviewed many more people had I stayed longer.

**Pilot and Primary Project.****In Thunder Bay.**

The interviews were conducted exactly as described in the Institutional Research Board (IRB) application and above. I flew to Ontario and met face-to-face with members of Lora's family. This was invaluable. The willingness and commitment to this project was extraordinary. I was able to drive out to the remote rail-line village Armstrong Station and visit the White Sands Reserve where I interviewed three people and met with three more in Thunder Bay. One person whom I was already acquainted with needed to share her recent grief and so we did not record the conversation for the project; she requested to follow up with me by telephone; which we did. I could not get to Collins, Lora's birthplace, as there is no road, and I did not have time to hike in the 25 miles to get there.

Digital recording equipment was used with signed consent from each interviewee. Participants were given the freedom to request the recorder to be stopped at any time and in one case I chose to do so with the agreement of the participant. In the initial invitation I had described the reasons and parameters of the case study project. I reviewed and recorded these at the outset of the interview and did not begin the conversation until everything was clear and the consent signed.

I did not interview any minors or people still in prison. I requested interviewees to be open to full disclosure of their relationship with Lora as I believe it would be difficult to protect their identities from others in the study. However, certain details are of such a sensitive nature they were left out of the study as first and foremost I would not want to cause any harm to an already traumatized family. I am in the

peculiar and at times stressful situation of having knowledge that only some family members have about people significant in other family members' lives.

The participants engaged in a deeply reflective process of sharing their memories of Lora and her life, including stories involving their own life memories. Although there was sadness and regret the emotions displayed were healthy and did not at any point lead me to seek extra support for the interviewees. I had information of free counseling services in Thunder Bay. I gave everyone a detailed description of the project deliverables and full disclosure of the final information to be included in the dissertation. Three people asked to read the paper and even to be involved in the analysis.

While in Ontario I discovered a number of anthropological/ethnographic studies on the Ojibway Bear Clan and the remote community of Lora's birth. I created a summary of the relevant pieces to add data that support a better understanding of Lora's early life in "the bush." Dr. E. Hedican, an anthropologist from Guelph University, lived in Collins doing ethnographic research on and off from 1971 to 1974. He wrote two books about the experience. More of this detail is included in the stories but it is yet another incredible coincidence that he should have lived in the village and has a record of Lora at the age of 3. The spelling of her name has been a mystery to me and I learned from Dr. Hedican (personal communication, September 5, 2013) that in fact she was born Loretta.

### **Armstrong Station.**

I had arrived in Thunder Bay on a Sunday afternoon and after a tour I organized myself for the long drive the next morning. I slept very little due to all sorts of anxiety

about the remoteness and also how I would approach the first interview of this pilot project. No amount of rehearsing my introduction seemed to alleviate this trepidation.

I drove almost 300 kilometers through wilderness passing huge slabs of pink granite, a beautiful wild landscape. Armstrong Station is a small town built on the need to have access to the Canadian National Railway line. According to the census in 2011 Armstrong Station had a population of 211 permanent residents. Beside Armstrong Station is the White Sands Reserve and about 25 miles west is the even more remote community of Collins related to but not belonging to the White Sands people. This is where Lora was born and lived as a small child. The Elders have decided not to allow a road to go to the community but only as far as the bottom end of Collins Lake as they believe it will destroy the sanctuary they are trying to create for healing their people.

Driving home from Armstrong Station I was relieved by how well it had gone and happy that I was getting closer to Thunder Bay and my hotel. I suddenly had the thought that I was getting near to civilization again which hit me as ironic. How ridiculous when I thought about the beauty of the land I had been travelling through, the quiet and happy lifestyle I observed in Armstrong Station compared to the dirt and despair so visible in parts of the place I was returning to. Here was an important place for reflection on my worldview and I wondered how it might have been evident to those I had just met. I certainly hope it was not.

I had not expected to interview any men as there are few left of the older generation who would be suitable to speak with. However, as I was interviewing Lora's aunt, her

partner came into the room and said he would like to contribute to my understanding. It turned out to be a sad but fascinating and helpful experience listening to his account.

Mostly his discussion was of how he was unable to express any love for his children or be intimate with a woman except when drunk. He talked of how he had never had anyone tell him they loved him as he had been in residential school for over 10 years. His emotion about his lack of affection to his children was heart wrenching and troubling in a way because the women did not express nearly as much emotion when telling of the violence and abuse they had experienced or their difficulty with relationships and parenting. This is something that I will consider more deeply and for future work in this area. He had completed a degree in social work and built a successful career and now is involved in the Truth and Reconciliation process (<http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=3>). He is still so obviously hurt when telling his story and how profoundly it damaged him. I really appreciated the value of bearing witness, listening, and feeling with him. I now understand a little better why Lora's poems (Appendix F) and letters are full of expressions of loving her son. She also told me that she never heard those words from anyone in her childhood and said them *all* the time to Stewart Junior when she was alive.

While still in Armstrong a cousin asked me to interview her. I had not expected this as she had lost her son just 2 weeks earlier. After the interview, which she requested take place at the lake shore, I drove her home. As we passed by the cemetery on the way to the reserve she looked to her right and let out a small gasp, just loud enough to share the depth of her grief. When we first met I said how sorry I was for her loss and could not imagine the pain, as I am also a mother. She wanted to know many details

of my boys especially my oldest son who as it turned out is one month older than the son she lost. I am still trying to understand this curiosity as for me I think this would have increased my pain.

**Data analysis.**

Analysis in qualitative studies can be messy and unpredictable, emergent and unfinished, according to Rogers (2003). Narrative analysis in particular, identifies how stories are shaped, or emplotted, and how they are embedded in existing cultural narratives and the social functions that they serve (Todorova, 2007). The process is interpretive, inductive, and iterative; as the researcher, I worked with the stories to reveal their meaning from the specific information and examples, all the while remaining open to re-examination when the text suggests another possibility. Deeper understanding emerged as I began to see how the tellers constructed their stories by using culturally specific details so as to examine the rhetorical forces employed to share their voice and personal account of the world (Silverman, 2000). There are at least three voices within a narrative, that of the storyteller, that of the theoretical framework providing the tools for interpretation, and the voice of the reader, researcher, or listener (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998). Instead of analysis, Absolon (2008) uses the term “making meaning” referring to the process of “sorting the information that was gathered and harvested. Making meaning is what we do with knowledge” (p. 16).

Narratives can be explored in a holistic- content way, looking at the complete life story and focusing on the content described. Also using the whole story but seeking to understand the holistic form or structure of the story which can reveal deeper levels of



personality and is said to be less easy to manipulate (Lieblich et al, 1998). Breaking down the content into statements, utterances, or even line-by-line categorical content analysis revealed specific themes, groups, and categories. For example, initially I read to learn the stories causing the trauma, listening from the various points of view of family members. Then I read to find the evidence of strengths that would demonstrate resilience and how Lora constructed hope and courage. This project heard 17 people in order to understand one person creating the possibility of capturing themes across the data set as well as from individual interviews that said something important about Lora. Ideally and in some of the themes there were a number of repetitions, however frequency does not necessarily mean the theme itself is more crucial (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes in phenomenological terms are the structures of the experiences, the knots in the web of our experiences around which the threads of daily life are spun and lived as a meaningful whole. Lived experience cannot be captured in conceptual abstractions, a theme is not a thing; themes are intransitive (Van Manen, 1990).

Using the categorical form mode of analysis can reveal stylistic or linguistic characteristics, for example types of metaphors, passive versus active language, even cultural information. All of these are shared through the use of loudness, pitch, tone, and melody along with non-verbal language which often carries even more valuable information. Ultimately all approaches have value and can be used to bring out the nuances and facts for interpretation and theme development.

In searching deeper into the construction of the stories and knowing that much of the essence of Lora could be lost in retrieving quotes. I looked into the area of writing itself as a method of inquiry and as the place to explore the meaning of the words

spoken by Lora and others, including myself. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe narrative inquiry as a process of reading and rereading field texts to construct and chronicle a summarized account of what is related in the field text. “[E]vocative writing touches us where we live, in our bodies. Through it we can experience the self-reflexive and transformational process of self-creation” (Richardson, 2000, p. 931). Richardson says that writing is also a way of knowing, a method of discovery and analysis. When using writing as method it becomes language-in-use: It describes how we word the world. This was the approach used to construct Chapters 4 and 5. I had always thought of creating vignettes as a way to make the study more interesting but now realize this was a significant method of analyzing the data as I collected and connected the interview data with Lora’s own writing, interviews, and poetry. Qualitative work carries its meaning in its entire text. As Richardson (2000) describes her process, “I write because I want to find something out. I write in order to learn something that I did not know before I wrote it” (p. 924). Here, “the boundary between ‘narrative’ and ‘analysis’ is dissolved” (p. 927). I looked for patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes either within Lora’s experiences or across the social setting common to her and the interviewees who were a part of her life (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). These vignettes are what Clandinin and Connelly refer to as interim texts looking backwards and forwards, inwards and outwards, situating the experiences within time and place. You build relationship with the ideas in various and multiple ways until a deeper understanding or higher state of awareness emerges (Wilson, 2008)

#### CHAPTER FOUR: LORA'S EARLY LIFE EXPERIENCE

This chapter analyzes and shares the data collected from multiple sources in both the pilot project and the main study. The data collected from Lora herself have been used in both pilot and main study discussions. There were two videos of Lora recorded during a retreat on Galiano Island, multiple audio recordings that Lora made by herself to tell her stories for the study and also for her son to hear her voice when he is mature enough. Included are two recordings of voice messages that Lora left on my home phone and the transcription of her speech at UBC which was published on pages 20-21 in the report from the conference

(<http://ccphe.familymed.ubc.ca/files/2012/04/December-2008-Conference-Report.pdf>).

Lora was interviewed for a magazine article in the *The St'át'imc Runner*; comments from this are included. She was also interviewed by another reporter who shared the audiotape with me, and finally, there is the collection of Lora's poems attached as Appendix F. There are places when I refer to something she has said that is not referenced to a document or recording because we had many years of conversations often along similar lines of discussion.

Six participants were interviewed for the pilot study: five female relatives and one male married to an aunt. There were nine participants interviewed for the main study, and the chaplain who chose to write his thoughts (attached as Appendix E). All of these people fulfilled a specific role in Lora's life and this role is used to identify them. All interviews were audio recorded and professionally transcribed.

Finally, there are the memories of my relationship with Lora. I fulfill many roles in this story: as the researcher for this dissertation, as the former prison recreation

therapist working with Lora, and in the last 7 years our relationship morphed into one of community mentor and supporter, friends, colleagues, and mutual learners.

### **The Formative Years (1971 to 1998): Hurt, Hurting, and Hurting**

Following the outline of the literature review starting with trauma, this chapter will tell the story of Lora's early life, firstly through the 10 questions on the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) check list which is described in Chapter 2. It serves here as a framework to explore the traumatic experiences Lora endured in her early life. Although it is not exhaustive in all potential areas of trauma experiences it is broad enough to elicit wide recollections and stories. The questionnaire was completed by over 17,000 respondents who are now being followed and tracked for longitudinal health outcomes (<http://www.cdc.gov/ace/about.htm>).

Secondly, an assessment of the assets described by the Search Institute will also be explored in relation to the stories told by Lora and her friends and family members. Participants will all be referred to in very general terms to avoid possible disclosure of who specifically said what, unless the statement is innocuous or has already been publicly disclosed.

This foundation will firstly describe the appalling trauma she endured as a child, the lack of external assets, and will assist in identifying where her strengths and resilient nature came from, as well as the roots of the maladaptive behaviours she adopted. The behaviours that came from hurt were directed at hurting others and in so doing were hurting herself even more deeply. Many stories will overlap in qualifying to answer a number of asset points or trauma markers. As this would seem redundant and

rambling, these sections will serve to give a generalized overview rather than a detailed compendium of Lora's stories, traumas, and assets.

### **Adverse Early Childhood (ACE) questions**

All questions are asked in relation to the first 18 years of life:

1. *Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? Or :Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?*

According to all of the people interviewed from Lora's early life and Lora herself, she endured significant violence from her father, mother, and stepfathers. A relative shares that she was made to care for her younger siblings, to clean the house, and eventually to steal and commit violence for her mother, but it was never enough. "Her mum was a very mean person when Lora was young and was always insulting her." Humiliation is a powerful control tool and does significant harm. According to a family member, "her mum was like in an instant get- like- snap and she'd be want to be –she would be mouthy and she would be wanting to beat you up."

2. *Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? Or: Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?*

There was considerable violence from her father; Lora described being dropped by him on a rock leaving a visible scar in the middle of her forehead causing a brain injury that delayed and damaged her speech: "my father was violent to me. I have a scar in the middle of my head that was done to me by my father." She reports having "a speech impediment from the head injury. Tests were done in Winnipeg to see how well I was going to develop." Lora thought that it might have been deliberate as she stated that he did not believe he was really her father, although an aunt stated this was

ridiculous due to the similarities she shared with him. She still wondered why her father wanted to get rid of her, because he also set fire to the cabin she and her brother were sleeping in. An uncle rescued them as the father had jumped on to a passing freight train. An aunt: "My brother [...] what he told me is that he saw the house on fire and then he saw [the father] running away from there and he jumped on a freight train, there was a freight train on the track and so he jumped on and he took off. He went inside and there was two kids who were sitting in top of the bed and he pulled them out." This same relative goes on to say that

he would lock the kids in the cabin I think, I'm not sure. Because he knew [the mother] could not get hold of the.... She couldn't go near the cabin when they were in there, because he was that, - the father was that aggressive.

The cousin shares that Lora "was afraid to go home all the time when we were young." She concluded by saying, "cancer was a walk in the park compared to what she went through as a kid."

3. *Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way? Or: Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?*

Lora reported a number of adult males in her life that molested her. The first occurrence was a man she did not know who followed her back to her family's cabin when she had been sent to get candles. It was pitch dark until she found the matches and by the light of the flame she saw he was exposing himself. She had the where with all to blow out the match and ran outside coming around and up behind him with a knife. Once she had returned to her parents, she told them and he was "beaten pretty good" and left the community. Lora finishes this story in an excerpt from her writing with an interesting illustration of her spirit:

that night was the last night I ever saw him. At least he's not out rapping or trying to rape a little girl, he couldn't touch me even with his dick out like that I still managed to live. Live I did.

One man was eventually charged with over 60 counts of sexual assault, including raping Lora and other family members although few gave evidence. He had drugged Lora who woke and recalls finding herself "sweating and I was naked, his arms were wrapped around me." In another interview she said, "it was really scary to wake up with a grown ass man I never knew what to say I just got up and left...I don't know what he had done because he drugged us most of the time." He told her nobody would believe her if she did tell.

Another man repeatedly fondled her sexually although she does not remember any actual penetration. Lora goes on to say in an excerpt from her writing (2012),

I sat there staring at [his] eyes calling me to his bed...I don't know how long it's been going on...but every time he'd come around I'd know when to go with or to him and he'd do this thing to me. He wouldn't sexually rape me just touching...I think he did this to all the children and people knew but they didn't care.

In an interview she reports,

I feel first dread and excited that [he] wanted to spend time with me...I felt scared of him sometimes. He'd be mean and spank my butt...I knew when [he] was there to touch me because his demeanour, his look, everything about him would shift.

There were often adults in the house and they did nothing to stop it. Lora felt as a child that it must be okay but as an adult she could not comprehend leaving a child so vulnerable. When she did tell her mother she was told she was making up lies. Her sister recalls similarly her mother's disbelief of the abuse from her boyfriend:

Anyways, there was a lot of-, and so he was sneaking into my room every now and then, doing his thing and like my mum was kind of blind-folded and I would try to tell her, but there was no way of getting to reason with her.

Lora went on to consider and share that

I think she did believe me but she didn't know what to do. It was just something that became a part of something natural just something that happens. You know just something that happens that we [*stuttering*] just part of everyday life.

She actually felt that he was her "best [...], you know. He wasn't my best [...]" but he taught me some of the work that I've did in carpentry today." Later in another interview Lora describes when at 15 she discovered he was still doing this to a younger relative she went to his house with a loaded gun and pointed it at his head. When asked what happened she simply said, "I felt sorry for him" and told him "you know what you just gotta f'in just gotta fuckin stop."

She was gang raped in her teens by a group of boys in a park although she managed to get away before all the boys had raped her. According to her sister, "she never trust anybody and I don't blame her for not trusting anybody especially the men, what happened to her when she was a girl ... she was abused a lot of times."

4. *Did you often or very often feel that no one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? Or: Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?*

Lora reported that she felt her whole life had been based on the pursuit of her mother's love. Even as she neared the end of her own life she was still hopeful for this. She asked me more than once and wrote in her journal, "how come she hated me so much, you know?" Over the years she told me many stories such as this one that she recorded while she was in hospital:

So anyways, one time she was trying to kick me out of the house, she told me to go pack and stuff like that...I went in and packed, I only had two little plastic bags, that's it...I wanted to leave but she wouldn't let me because she wouldn't have a babysitter, house cleaner, everything like that...there wasn't a day that went by where I could just relax and, and be, and be a girl, a child, free.



I always felt lonely, yeah, when I was away from Pascopee. Even though Pascopee was just only three of us, it felt like, you know, that was my home, I felt safe there.

This was the place she lived with her grandparents. An aunt remembers her own father, Lora's grandfather: "he was very violent when he was drunk but when he was sober, oh he was a sweetheart, everybody loved him." However, according to a family member the grandmother was said to be the "mean spirited one."

If you would do a kind deed for her it was never enough...so I imagine that [Lora's mother] must have lived quite a life with her mum being the way she was....So maybe that's why she grew up the way she was because she don't have that loving nurturing....I can understand what [Lora's mother] went through. What I could not understand is how she could not love her children. Was she that damaged? I was damaged I did the best I could to raise my kids....I often say to people, I wonder what sort of people we would have been if we were loved and nurtured in the residential school. Maybe I would have my nursing degree today that's what my aspiration, to be a nurse was. I would have been a nurse today. As I speak I can feel this, my neck is starting to....When I talk about that.

5. *Did you often or very often feel that you didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? Or: Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?*

Two of the interviewees and Lora herself described her parents as drinking heavily. One aunt reported excessive use of alcohol by her mother during pregnancy and certainly Lora believed she was likely to have been damaged by violence, drugs, and alcohol in utero.

Lora had told the story many times of a visit she and her family made to Sioux Lookout, a town about 3 hours from Collins by rail to the east.

My mum had left me in Sioux Lookout...she told me not to fall asleep or she would leave me...well I didn't think she was going to leave me... but I was tired and she was drinking a 40 ounce of vodka...Smirnoff, and so I fell asleep the next day they were gone, my whole family was gone. So anyways so I stayed in that room for at least two days by myself...I had went down to the meal line ticket and told them my mum was sick upstairs...so I already knew how to bullshit... by that time and so then they gave us tickets for the whole day...so anyways I had went over to

the hospital where there was a cafeteria and had my oatmeal and did that at supper time again and anyways the second day they were getting suspicious and I could kind of feel it and so I decided that I had to leave ... I know that child and family service is gonna come... and I knew it's never been pretty to be in child and family services, ... I knew that was... I knew that I had to stand in a corner an hour before meal time and always had to eat grass which now I know was lettuce and always having to dress up like a girl and they always took my shoes away because I always wore moccasins... I am always fought for my moccasins they were so much warmer... I was about 6 when they took me away I may have been younger they took me when my parents were drinking ... So anyways.

I said she was not feeling good...I took whatever I had which was not very much and I closed the door... I knew I would not be able to get back into the room and sleep anymore ... As for - before that I had gotten myself kicked outta child and family services house before that ...well anyways I crapped on the mothers beds and I also beaten up their two children really bad and pissed on the children's beds ... I did lots ...They said get her outta here ... so my mum had to come and get me... I just wanted to see my mum... I knew violence was going to get me outta there - because if you seen it enough you know that violence isn't good and it always brings the cops ... So anyways as I left the hostel it was kinda cold and so I stayed on the street of Sioux Lookout and I stayed under a park bench and I looked for my mother in the bars all night. And it's amazing - how people don't even notice a child out on the street of Sioux Lookout... it's a small town... at night ... the next day I did my circuit around to look for my mum... I had remembered some of the places that we've went to ... I had been with my mum... I went down to the station and saw [a friend's mum] and I saw [the daughters]. I asked her to pay me home it was only two dollars ... she said "where is your mum" and she was more upset that she had to pay me home than she was that my mother left me... so I got on the train ... She said don't ask for anything because you're not going to get anything... I was really hungry but she told me not to ask for nothing. I was really hungry but I didn't say anything ... when I got home I went right home. She was cooking pork chops again.... The only thing she said was... "Oh there you are." I just ate and I left.... I played for a whole month and I didn't go home for a whole month after that ... I slept outside sometimes and sometimes I stayed at my friend's house I stayed in our house we built in the bush... we were being abused, sexually abused by [...] and other people in the community - and so it wasn't really safe for any children in the community.

A relative remembers that they broke into the Catholic Church to get the "bread and grape juice ... 'cause we were hungry ... I do think she was hungry all the time. ... I remember we went foraging in the dump 'cause we were hungry." The children dug up

“canned food just buried in the ground. Like a house burnt down there ... we were trying to open the cans to eat.” It is possible it was the burn site of her family cabin.

Lora describes times when she and her brother would

Sit outside the bar waiting for our mother to walk out sometimes we'd be half asleep outside the bar in Armstrong around our age group you have to be tough because of the way you lived watchin' our parents drink, act drunk ... we just followed, me and my brother Shane we'd be walking around Armstrong barely eating.

6. *Were your parents ever separated or divorced?*

Lora's mother was never married to the father and they separated when he left the community having set the fire. There were two or possibly three long-term relationships after the father left, one of whom went to prison for molesting another sibling. After he was released the mother took him back.

7. *Was your mother or stepmother: Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her? Or: Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? Or: Ever repeatedly hit at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?*

It is interesting that this question is only asking about male partner violence when in Lora's family there was violence on both sides. According to a sibling,

there was so much fighting between my dad and her dad and my mum and all three of them, right because her dad which used to be abuse my mum as well more than my dad.... Watching my mum get thrown out and get slapped around punched around.

Her mother was beaten badly by both men and one interviewee said that her brother would take the mother and her children to the other end of the lake, until it was safe to return to their home.

One night she was being beaten with a belt buckle when she retaliated by stabbing the stepfather in the “belly button and that time she almost killed him.” He was taken

to hospital by a freight train that the police requested to stop. After this the mother and the children were made to leave the community and went to live in Thunder Bay.

8. *Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs?*

Almost all of the adults in Lora's life abused alcohol and eventually her mother and younger brothers were addicted to pain medications. Lora blames her mother for giving the medications to the boys and remembered being jealous that they should get drugs but not her. "And I walked into the room and she was counting out her medications. And then she handed the boys their share. They were just kids then." A cousin remembers staying with Lora and her mother giving them Tylenol 3 to put them to sleep, they were about 12 at the time. In general, according to an aunt, "these children were subjected to all the problems stemming from the alcohols. Shane, [who was murdered in 2005] and Lora probably seen too much for their ... in their childhood."

9. *Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?*

Lora believed that her older brother Shane had mental health issues although she could not say what. She also knew her mother was depressed due to her early onset arthritis and lupus which appears to have a genetic foundation as one of Lora's cousins has been diagnosed in his early 20s. Lora mentions wanting to commit suicide and later stated that she had actually tried to. "I remember kissing my brother, [...], goodnight and I wanted to end my life that time. ... [he], was just a baby then," which would mean Lora was an early teen.

A relative who was in residential school with Lora's mother recalls the paralyzing fear they experienced at night and the health outcomes she has due to the prolonged stress in her childhood. She believes the same would be true for Lora's mother,

“Even [...], her fear, her intense fear of being taken. What was her body going through? All this clenching on a regular basis? Definitely some kind of illness will transpire from there.”

*10. Did a household member go to prison?*

Most of her older relatives were in residential school, which I believe had similar and possibly even more complex, long lasting, and devastating effects on this family. Lora's older brother went to prison and a long-term live-in boyfriend of her mother's went to prison for molesting a sibling.

#### 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents

##### External assets.

##### *Support.*

1. *Family Support: Family life provides high levels of love and support*

The only support that Lora spoke of was her grandparents. The love she received from her grandfather was particularly important. She thought it to be conditional on her abilities to help him on the trap lines and be strong “like a boy.” She remembers him holding her hand as they walked in the bush and taught her to be careful of old traps left in the bush. He had given her a plush rabbit that she cherished and her son still has today.

2. *Positive Family Communication: Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel*

Communication was frequently aggressive, demeaning, and threatening. Lora might have sought advice from her grandfather but unlikely from her mother. Her father was rarely a part of her life.

3. *Other Adult Relationships: Young person receives support from three or more*

Lora had only her grandmother, and although she was not a loving person, she would protect the children when the adults were drinking by taking them in a canoe and towing every other available boat to a small island in the lake where they would camp until the sobering up had taken place. Sometimes the children would go out to the island alone to avoid trouble. Lora did not at any time mention a person she could consider a support person and says in an interview, “I felt I never belonged anywhere in the first place.”

4. *Caring Neighborhood: Young person experiences caring neighbors*

“We weren’t invited to play in their houses or to play with their kids we were left to play by ourselves....People like the [...] who were half White and half Indian and they thought we were dirty... how can you be dirty when we used to swim every day?”

The neighbourhood that Lora felt was most caring was the wild trapping lands around her grandfather’s cabin. However, according to an aunt, closer to the settlement of Collins,

everybody was drinking in that community and they actually said that community was very violent and very – there was an article written by some guy in Toronto like he came to the community and took pictures of all the negative stuff; kids running around muddy, and stuff like that and he called the community a demon community. There must be an article somewhere in Toronto and he called the place Satan’s place.... because of all the violence that he had seen there.

Thunder Bay was not a place of caring neighbors she had been attacked by a White boy as described by her cousin:

Lora was very afraid of this one boy she was just terrified of this kid.... As soon as he saw her he would come charging at her... I’d never seen her afraid before until that... until we ran into that boy on Brown Street.

Apparently she later stated that he had attacked her and that he always attacked her.

5. *Caring School Climate: School provides a caring encouraging environment and*

6. *Parent Involvement in Schooling: Parent(s) are actively involved in helping the child succeed in school*

When Lora was about 6 she was put into government care and sent to a new school, which was very difficult because she did not speak or understand English. She remembers being slapped for not speaking and didn’t understand why she was being hit. The teacher also tormented her and made fun of her stutter and so she decided to burn the school down so she would not have to attend anymore. Lora remembers

being frustrated that her lovely soft, comfortable, and warm moccasins were taken from her and she was made to wear hard shoes that did not fit and hurt her feet. It became somewhat of a metaphor for her experience of the hard and painful western culture she was suddenly thrust into, by comparison with the softness of nature and the freedom of her bush life. I recall noticing that her son always wore shoes at least a size larger than necessary. When I also noticed two boxes of shoes, each another size bigger, in a closet and asked if they were on sale Lora simply responded that her son would never have to wear shoes that hurt. *Kinomaage* is the Ojibway word for education and it literally means the earth will show you the way. Daily life is the teacher and it can be a hard task master. One area of interest is the discussion about her grandfather's approach to parenting by an aunt who is one of his daughters:

I think it's just the way that parents raise their children too at that time because, that's the way he tried doing that to us too like his mum and dad.... you guys are gonna learn the same way. We have to get up maybe five o'clock in the morning, if we didn't get up we would get the whip, a little twig on our feet, so we had to get up and start hanging our blankets out, sweeping the floor and whatever.... So that's the way he raised us and nowadays I guess you would call that that's child abuse, but that's just how he was raised so he did the same thing to us.

Lora's sister recalls that her mother taught them all sorts of skills and was also determined they would be able to look after themselves and be tough. Perhaps some of her abusive parenting was, in her mind, for the best of her daughters.

***Empowerment.***

7. *Community Values Youth: Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth*  
and
8. *Youth as Resources: Young people are given useful roles in the community*



This was true to some extent in Pascopee with her grandparents and is certainly true of traditional Ojibway peoples. Lora tells the story of her grandparents making chores into games, giving them a useful role. When an animal had been killed every part of it would be used and respected; the processes involved would include the children. Lora recalled, for example, that once a hide had been cleaned it had to be dried and stretched for use in making moccasin's and clothing. It would be hung and the children would each grab an edge and swing and run around in a circle to twist it and then as they stopped it would swing them around as it unraveled. The children would also stomp on the wild rice harvest as it was laid out on a skin to separate the husks.

*9. Service to Others: Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week*

In a unique way Lora was of service to others; as a child she was described by several family members as caring of other children and a protector and a teacher.

When described as a caretaker by the warden during an interview, Lora recalled that she

was actually one of the bravest kids back home. I always used to walk the kids back home at night, so I would walk everybody home and I would just hang out by myself at night, stay out by myself... I was always doing that when I was young. It's usually pretty scary I was sort of scared but... I been in the bush that you don't shouldn't be scared because of the animals so you have to hide that because we lived in the bush, so in the bush you always learned how to hide that feeling and I had already learned how to be tough and I always wanted people to know I was tough and brave... and so that's another reason why I did it.

Sadly Lora's defense of and service to others became maladaptive and often recruited violence which as she stated clearly, "I knew violence was gonna get me outta there."

*10. Safety: Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood*

Definitely not: Home was a place of great stress that Lora tried to avoid. Her cousin describes her fear in Thunder Bay of a White boy who had beaten her up which also changed her sense of safety completely. She would walk many extra blocks to avoid meeting him in order to reach home. The same cousin describes Lora's stutter as non-existent until her mother would come close saying that

she did it when she was stressed out ... When she was relaxed she would talk normal. When ... it was time to go home she would stutter ... Everytime her mum came around, if I remember she would... it was, kind of, like she would freeze, she wouldn't be relaxed anymore. And it was kind of like, you know, a rat in a cage. They bang around and try to get out.

***Boundaries and expectations.***

*11. Family Boundaries: Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts*

Lora and her siblings were not monitored and the rules they lived by that were clear were often unfair and had harsh consequences. "Never had any rules didn't have to go to bed or get up for school or clean our teeth we lived a very free life like... because in Collins people drank a lot."

*12. School Boundaries: School provides clear rules and consequences*

Unable to determine from the data

*13. Neighborhood Boundaries: Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young*

The neighbours apparently did not want Lora and her siblings playing with their children and so it is unlikely they were taking responsibility for them or their behavior. Lora was molested by a man later convicted of multiple sexual assaults. He was the father of her best friend and of course a neighbor.

*14. Adult Role Models: Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior*

Within the immediate family there are none, apart from her grandparents, with whom she lived early in life and had sporadic visits to see. She said in one interview, “you know I never had really good relations with people either, that I was always beaten or mistreated so anyways ... and that carried on to my adulthood.”

*15. Positive Peer Influence: Young person's best friends model responsible behavior*

Lora had maintained contact with friends from her youth who have not ended up in the justice system although risky and dangerous games seem to have been played by all. Two interviewees described a game played on the roof of a house, which they both acknowledge was dangerous. They also used to run alongside the trains and jump on if they could; on one occasion Lora was dragged and could have been badly hurt, but was able to get free at a spot that was sandy as she rolled down the bank.

*16. High Expectations: Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.*

Lora discusses the encouragement to steal and even commit violence to protect the family honour. She was 2 years clean of alcohol when both her father and mother said she must enact revenge for her brother's beating.

***Constructive use of time.***

*17. Creative Activities: Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts*

Not in any organized sense but Lora engaged in pretend play that was mostly about family and they were always a happy family according to one of the playmates. Lora would play the father and the cousin always had to be the baby. She stated that “there

was never any meanness in our play. It was always about taking care of each other.” She often made houses in the snow with built-in chairs and even made a fire in the snow house. She also made forts out of blankets. Her sister reminisces, “oh I just miss that woman sometimes, all her ideas.”

*18. Youth Programs: Young person spends 3 or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations*

When she was in a youth justice facility, she enjoyed camping and learning other outdoor activities. This is noted by her sister as a time when she had gained an understanding of what another type of life could offer her.

*19. Religious Community: Young person spends 1 hour or more per week in activities in a religious institution*

The family did not pursue any religious activities with the children although her grandmother was quite religious and her mother did attend church alone. However the correctional officer states that Lora knew a lot about her spirituality and culture. She also spoke Ojibway fluently. How she had developed a personal belief system is unknown but she shared some thoughts in her deliberations over death. “I’m not scared of death, because I know we don’t just die our lives continue on, on, on again where it ends nobody knows.”

*20. Time at Home: Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" 2 or fewer nights per week*

Lora and her brother were often roaming at night. Lora describes making sure the other children got home safely from their free play in Collins, but that she would often stay out at night and sometimes hang out with older children, or simply be alone

outside. After being abandoned in Sioux Lookout she said that having made her way home, she got some food and then left and was out and roaming for a month.

**Internal assets.**

***Commitment to learning.***

*21. Achievement Motivation: Young person is motivated to do well in school*

Lora believed she had a learning disability and could not remember well, but continued to try to get Math grade 11 while in custody. She was very committed to her son's education demonstrating her understanding of the importance of learning. She had set up an education fund for him.

*22. School Engagement: Young person is actively engaged in learning*

The learning that is spoken of and obvious through the interviews and memories written by Lora are of life's lessons and she showed remarkable insight and critical thinking skills in her adulthood. She always took notes in meetings and was often searching the Internet to learn. Lora was a lifelong learner, always believing she could understand more, in any experience or endeavor including her cancer treatments.

*23. Homework: Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day*

Unable to determine from the data.

*24. Bonding to School: Young person cares about her or his school*

School was a place of considerable stress as described earlier. A youth detention camp she attended at about 15 was a place she spoke of fondly and learned things she believed were useful.

*25. Reading for Pleasure: Young person reads for pleasure 3 or more hours per week*

It is unclear where Lora learned this from but she loved to read and enjoyed complex novels; she always took a copy of a book called *The Shack* by Wm. Paul Young, to every appointment. This is important due to the content of the book “where tragedy confronts eternity,” a dilemma Lora was trying to reconcile in her life. She gave me a copy just before she passed away.

***Positive values.***

*26. Caring: Young Person places high value on helping other people*

Lora cared about others even to the protection she offered to girls working the streets and the support she afforded younger relatives and children she played with. “I used to sit on the stairs and hear my mum cry in pain... I used to go in and wash her face with a rag, rinse off all the sweat.” She is frequently referred to as a “protector” as in this case by a cousin: “she was always looking after us, ... always put herself in front if it was dangerous.” She describes in her journal a story that haunted her:

And it was actually quite saddening. Because the lady that was out on the street that night on that she was drunk... don't know if it was Wayne's mum, but it was her and so I gave her my ten bucks because she was drunk and she wanted to get to the other end of town... like that's all I got... That's how heartless the world can be that there is this lady crying on the street drunk. It was freezing cold and nobody stopped. Nobody checked on her.

*27. Equality and Social Justice: Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty*

This was certainly true of Lora as an adult but when it began is difficult to ascertain. Lora's cousin reports that she was often hungry herself. She was also said to care for the younger children and shared the food they found. A story detailed earlier related

foraging in the dump and breaking into the Catholic Church to steal the “bread and grape juice.” Lora also tells the story of trying to understand what it must be like to be homeless and sniffing intoxicants on the streets of Winnipeg. She had a strong desire to understand the experiences of others by stepping into their world. In her adult life she would collect anything being discarded that she thought might come in handy to someone in need. Her garage was full of baby items to pass on and pop bottles that she and her son collected for breast cancer research.

*28. Integrity: Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs and*

*29. Honesty: Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy"*

Lora had a way of telling the truth to people and certainly was highly attuned to other people lying to her. She was genuinely sorry for cutting up her aunt's IDs and unraveling her threads; “she was sitting there crying, ‘I'm sorry Aunty, I'm sorry’ ... She was honest and then – very honest, that story I told you about her when she was sitting on the ground saying ‘I'm sorry Aunty.’”

*30. Responsibility: Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility*

Lora was made to be responsible for her siblings but also she took seriously this role with other children. A cousin describes a house fire when Lora had built a tent fort in the basement with a group of younger children and a candle had caught the blanket on fire. According to her cousin she did not stop frantically rescuing the children in her care, even when the fire department had arrived.

*31. Restraint: Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs*

Unlikely, due to the parental behaviours demonstrated. One note she makes is about watching older kids drinking and having sex at night even with their cousins; she commented on the inappropriateness of this.

***Social competencies.***

*32. Planning and Decision Making: Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices*

There are many stories of her ability to survive in the bush and make choices to keep herself safe. Most poignant of this is how she survived in Sioux Lookout when she was about 6, hiding out in the hostel room and getting in the lineup for food tickets. She also describes an intuitive knowing that suspicion was mounting and child protection might take her again, so she found a way to get home on the train.

*33. Interpersonal Competence: Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills*

Although she could be violent at times there was also a compassionate and caring nature which was reported by many people from her childhood and later in life.

Considering the abuse from her mother this story illustrates her sensitivity and love for her mother:

I used to walk around the house with a knife at night. And one night I was standing at her door, yeah, I slowly opened the door, slowly crept in. I had that knife right behind my back. Yeah, I think she heard me. I think she heard me, I think she heard me 'cause she was, that's when she looked up at me. And I was just gonna stab her up. I took the biggest, sharpest knife in the kitchen I could find. Just tired of it, you know, tired of washing clothes, tired of washing the house, tired of washing dishes, you know, just tired of being her damn slave. Babysitting, looking after kids...I was going to be beaten up, I thought no. ...Oh, so I ended up kissing her goodnight that time and then I walked out with the knife, hid it and put it back in the kitchen. *Never could look at it again.*



*34. Cultural Competence: Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds*

Lora did not trust many people and certainly not White people in her early life. Her sister says that Lora did not trust anyone and with good reason. I remember a conversation about racism when I challenged Lora on comments about corrections staff. She had called them “blue shirts” and I said that was a way of de-personalizing them and stereotyping and thought this might have been the end of our working relationship. A few days later an officer mentioned that Lora had tapped her on the shoulder and addressed her by name which was unheard of and then a second staff who is of African descent mentioned that Lora walked the track with her and had the first real conversation ever noted with a staff. These were small steps but important strides for Lora.

*35. Resistance Skills: Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations*

Lora became involved with gangs and seemed to seek out dangerous situations. She describes more than one experience of being homeless deliberately to learn what it felt like and how that influenced her understanding of kids living and sniffing intoxicants on the street and “working girls.” She welcomed the sense of family from gang affiliation and almost got the tattoo for a gang she had been working for—this is significant for a female. Lora sought connection and acceptance but said she rarely found it in her early life.

*36. Peaceful Conflict Resolution: Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently*

According to various stories by others and Lora herself, she would resolve conflict with threats, violence, and aggression.

***Positive identity.***

*37. Personal Power: Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me"*

Lora described the opposite, many times when she was hurt or abused and the feeling of helplessness.

*38. Self-Esteem: Young person reports having a high self-esteem*

Lora never discussed self-esteem. There were elements of a sense of efficacy in certain settings. In one discussion about boys she recalls never even looking at a good-looking guy as he would be "out of her league" indicating a poor self-image.

*39. Sense of Purpose: Young person reports that "my life has a purpose"*

Despite the direness of her childhood trauma and negligence Lora felt lucky for the elements that were positive, mainly her grandparents and a place called Pascopee. Her sense of purpose was strong later in life. As a child she is reported to be a protector many times and so this might have been a self-ascribed role and purpose.

*40. Positive View of Personal Future: Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future*

Lora believed that she would never be able to stay out of prison for more than 6 months and that she would be dead by 35. She said she had made a pledge never to have a child until or if she was able to believe that she could live and support a child to be healthy and happy, to give them a childhood very different from her own. This demonstrates a change in Lora's belief about herself and her future as her pregnancy was deliberate to bring a child into her life and she chose the father as well.

**Summary.**

Following the guide of the ACE study and the Search Institute's Developmental Assets offered a format for exploring the strengths, deficits, and traumas of Lora's childhood and early adult development. It has been a useful exercise in identifying some of the earliest traits, competencies, attitudes, and learned behaviours both healthy and maladaptive that help to understand the resiliency factors and tools that she recruited later in life.

One aspect of the whole life history in the overarching story is the belief Lora shared from her earliest life that she would not live to be 35. There is tentative early support for the idea that believing in an early death is associated with youth crime and violence. Fatalism or *futurelessness* may account for the eclipse of hope allowing fearlessness and uninhibited violence and criminal behaviour (Brezina, Tekin, & Topalli, 2009). Previous research has demonstrated that prior exposure to violence is likely to lead to later perpetration of aggression, while focusing on the immediate gratification of needs.

Evidence of strengths and deficits has become clearer while finding the clues to how and who she learned, inherited, or adopted these strategies, and unconscious behaviours from. Chapter 5 lays out the second part of Lora's life through the stories and comments of the interviewees. Finally, there will be a discussion of the factors and how they relate to the interventions necessary in prison and beyond.

## CHAPTER FIVE: LORA'S ADULT YEARS

We were not perfect, but we had no jails, we had no taxes...no wine and no beer, no old peoples' homes, no children's aid society, we had no crisis centres. We had a philosophy of life based on the Creator. We had our humanity. (Excerpt from Art Solomon's book, *Songs for the People: Teachings on the Natural Way*, quoted on <https://indspire.ca/laureates/art-solomon/>)

### **The Final Years (1999 to 2013): Healing, Harmonizing, and Holding Hope**

This chapter addresses the second part of the literature review, and the systems Lora had to learn to navigate while exploring healing from trauma and what transformational change and learning are founded on. The quotations are taken from interviews with people who journeyed with Lora through this time. They are the people whom she drew into her life one way or another. People who helped her cope and who it seemed created a sort of trauma membrane as she was able to let go of the past and interpret this new world: people that she had chosen. Ironically those people came predominantly from her federal correctional sentence and helped her to navigate the other systems she had to interact with. They are referred to by the role they played in Lora's life.

#### **Correctional system**

Lora began her criminal journey at a very early age by setting fire to her group home/residential school. From here forward she spent most of her life in and out of custody doing a lot of provincial jail time firstly in Open Youth detention at 12 or 13 mainly for fighting and she explains,

for breach of probation, drinking under intoxication and I was in a group home and they were always happy to call the cops. Finally at 17 that when they gave me time ... I finally said to my lawyer why are they always giving me breaches? I'll just do my time... I am not gonna listen to your laws having to go home and I had already had a life, a street life... Instead of giving me probation than community service ...

it's crazy it doesn't make sense I was already making my street life it was starting to come up.

**The story of the crime.**

The following is a detailed, although slightly edited for brevity, quotation from an interview Lora did with a reporter who was interested in telling her story. It is her recounting of the crime that brought her into federal custody for over 8 years.

How did I get to fed time? ... actually that there was a killing on September 28<sup>th</sup> as for my brother had killed somebody ... and I ended up cutting my hair ... that was the first time I ever cut my hair. I knew that if I stayed in Thunder Bay the cops would try and pin me with this murder whether I did it or not ... as for my brother told me that night that he killed somebody and I didn't see it happen but I was in the vicinity of the block.

They had beat him up weeks prior and they had left him on the school playground naked and so when he got up it was school time and the cops picked him up and they put him in the hospital, and so he was badly beaten up by the eight guys ... and so he wanted revenge and so ... as for my dad had told me and my dad and my mum told me so it's your job to protect the family right? ... I didn't want to do that because I wanted to go straight and I was two years clean of alcohol ... so anyways when that happened I said okay ... Oh God here we go again... right?

This time it was our parents that wanted that ... they were really upset because of what happened to my brother [...] and then my dad wanted to talk to me and I thought he was going to talk to me about changing my life and I was ready to tell him I was going straight... and it was a shock to me to have my father actually tell me to do this thing... so I said okay so whenever he wants it done we'll take care of it ... so the night it all happened there was nobody around there was only just me and another guy... so anyways he needed me to keep everybody at bay while he takes care of this guy, keep watch so that he could take care of this guy that actually did it all right? ... so anyways we went out looking for him and the first guy that I seen I punched him out ... my brother said no that's not the guy... so I picked him up and 'pologized and gave him some money. So I said, I'm sorry, I'm sorry and I picked him up and gave him some money. And so anyways we walking around a couple of blocks and there they are and then we saw the guys all eight of them and they were trying to be IP [Indian Posse]... So anyways they are trying to claim that they are IP... which I found out later from [...] they were IP. I didn't know they were IP and so anyways the brawl breaks out and one guy ends up dead and another one paralyzed. My brother ended up doing the whole friggin gang ... Yeah he had a knife and I didn't know he had a knife because I said that specific night no to weapons... I already knew no more and that right? I would get pinned every time somebody gets hurt in that town I get picked up... I knew the cops already had my name on that list and they want to get rid of me... so I tol' my

brother that night no weapons and he agreed. So when I found out after that that guy was dead like I woke up at 9:47 that morning... when I heard the radio station ... I was like shit I gonna be pinned for this.... If they knew there was a girl involved in this I'm gonna get pinned regardless if I'm there or not and right away the cops were looking for me ... I guess they got my brother that night and so I was at the bar that night I decided to leave early for some reason I had a feeling so it's a good thing I did leave because the cops were outside the bars that night and they were ID' ing people, I don't know I just had a weird feeling I was being hunted that night... sure enough 9:47 that day broadcast on the news ... they announced it that they were looking for a lady... Oh shit and my sister said oh yes she lives on the end of town... she was already for ratting me out... so as for the cops went to my mother's house and my mother said I hadn't been there. So just as they left about a half hour later I had already cut my hair pretty short and went and stole some glasses at the optical shop... the donation bin ... I got rid of all the clothes that we had and because I didn't want to be pinned for anything because I didn't do nothing ... and I didn't want to get pinned for anything and I knew... so anyways I went home and asked my mum for a pair of shoes and I went downstairs and then she told the cops... the cops came by and they asked her and she told them... she came by and she cut her hair and she took some shoes outta here ... I didn't do anything bad but [...] did something bad. I said I didn't know he killed someone... but then my mum got really upset with me "why don't you change. Why don't you ever change"... I don't understand why she would be so upset with me when they asked for it to happen... and now all of a sudden when it happened now I am the bad guy again ... My parents always want something but they are never happy ... because then the cops are at the door and now they want to be the good guys. My mum gave them a statement and she told the cops she told me never to come around again and I so I didn't go back till last year [2008]. The cops found me in Calgary.

Lora was sentenced to 8 years for her part in the aggravated assault causing death. Her brother was also sentenced to a long prison term for his role; nobody was convicted of murder.

By 1999 when I first met her, Lora was considered one of the most violent and difficult to manage incarcerated women in Canada. She was transferred to Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women (BCCW) in British Columbia (BC) from an 8 month stint in segregation at Saskatoon Penitentiary having seriously assaulted a staff. There she was allowed to shower infrequently by her personal standard and always with an officer in front and one behind as she was *moved* from one area to another. She had

one hand cuffed to the shower while she washed. Lora was fastidious about her personal hygiene and grooming. She spent the time in her cell plucking the hair on her legs with tweezers while, according to a facilitator at BCCW, Lora remembered that “she talked for hours to her mother.” Apparently “she talked to her as though she was sitting in the room and that she was having a conversation with her” talking through the ether to her mother who sadly never heard one word. “I think she sought advice. I think she was able to reflect using that other person in the room with her to go to a much deeper place of connection with herself.” In court Lora spoke of a conversation with her grandfather when she was in Stanley Park, Vancouver. At this time her grandfather was long since deceased.

According to her lawyer, “you could have heard a pin drop”; she spoke as though the discussion was present time and the judge was completely attentive. The conversation was around gaining clarity about her son and her sense of responsibility to him. This connection that to Lora was so natural, according to her lawyer, is a “way not to be isolated so it is a form of resilience – I can do seg time because I have all these people within me... those are valid relationships.”

Lora was believed to be unmanageable and incapable of re-integrating into general population from solitary. The officers were fed up with her and according to the warden she was also “so un-trustful of the staff.” She promised the deputy warden of BCCW who spoke with her by phone that she “would not hit any of our staff,” a promise she kept and later proudly pointed out to the warden, “I kept my word.” The facilitator remembered the first day she arrived “with the bandana over her eyes, a tall

woman, very powerful, quite attractive and a really strong sense of presence and of course a reputation that preceded her that made you quake in your boots.”

**Hope and hopeless.**

Coming from a situation and a place of apparent hopelessness Lora was transferred to BCCW where the warden offered her the possibility of a chance to change. Her reason for this approach is simply based on her belief in human potential for change and what that requires:

You know and I mean I think the whole thing about hope, why would you do something if you had no hope ... You know if you had absolutely no hope of attaining anything whether it's you know something material that you want or something immaterial that you want or -- I mean if you had absolutely no hope of ever getting out jail why would you bother doing anything.

She goes on to say,

I think she was ready to move on from being the Lora that her people -- I don't think that was something she liked about herself and I think that when you give people the opportunity to do something differently and when they want to do something differently - and you show them how to do something differently. And then when you reward them for doing something differently and even when they make a mistake you don't say well that's it the heck with you and sort of back you go to where you were and don't bother with me again. Because people are going to make mistakes right?

When thinking back to her arrival at BCCW Lora said, “[w]ell nobody ever gave me a chance, nobody ever kicked me back off a seg, they just locked me up in there because I can do seg.” “Seg” or segregation, was easy for Lora, and as she noted in her speech earlier,

I liked to be in segregation, because you don't have to focus on anybody, you don't have to worry about getting involved in anything, getting in trouble with anybody or getting into arguments with the correctional officers about where I was supposed to be and when I was supposed to be there.



Isolation was a common experience from her childhood often spent wandering at night alone and rejected by older family members and other adults in her community. It speaks to her character as noted by the friend, “the fact that you can come out of that and actually have any kind of rational mind is a miracle in itself and speaks to resilience.”

The warden recognized her desire to keep trying, that “there was something in her that I sensed she was willing to do things if we could find the right things for her, that that door was never slammed shut.” In 2001 she was given the opportunity to get out of prison for an hour at a time. She was granted escorted temporary absences (ETAs) to go outside the fence, running along the river next to the prison with me. The first day we went out she seemed edgy which I expected but realized very quickly when a young man and his dog were jogging towards us, just how insecure she felt. In a split second she was attached to me shoulder to shoulder and her breathing was far more rapid than the jogging caused. I now believe that her body was reacting to a trauma memory of the boy on Brown Street and that she was responding reflexively and the higher cognitive functions were definitely compromised (Siegel, 1999). I realized in that split second how afraid she was of the world and it sparked a significant shift in our working relationship.

Lora remembered that escorted temporary absence (ETA):

I went out for a TA with Alison ...you know I was afraid of getting out ... I always knew that I would never last more than 6 months as because ... its 4 years now ... it's just the fear of being around people and having that attitude ... You know... that's what I always thought I can never move passed that... well a.. because and I never knew what to expect and I always had to be on guard because of being raped and being beaten and you know I never had really good relations with people either that I was always beaten or mistreated so anyways and that carried on to my adult

hood and the minute somebody would do something bad to me I would always react violently.

The warden stated that they “were willing to take some different approaches, [take] some challenges on and that we were successful with some ... I definitely think it was different from what Lora had experienced before.” Later at the end of her sentence she was transferred back to a more rigid environment and yet again put into segregation based on a false report of a staff hostage taking and of course her earlier history. The BC warden recalls sending her a book she thought would be valuable reading and when she asked Lora if she had received it she said “‘no because I am only allowed one book and I was doing my math so I chose my math book,’ and I remember being just furious because I thought how absolutely retarded.” The lawyer observed the irony; one person is disallowed two books, and is locked in a segregation cell. Another person made the one book only rule and imposed it. Could two books be fashioned into a weapon? Who is the unhealthy one? It removed dignity and personal control; to study math for an hour and then escape into a story: what a possibility.

Much of correctional security is based on interpersonal control to keep individuals in line ostensibly to create a safer environment. Emerging research indicates this is a fallacy and that in fact people who feel controlled, whose autonomy is removed, will respond by becoming more antisocial and potentially more violent (Moller & Deci, 2009). Self-determination theory posits that all human beings share a basic psychological need for autonomy and in the presence of independence will be healthier and happier. “The data suggest that trait level experiences of interpersonal control were positively related to both interpersonal violence, and to the experience of

mechanistic dehumanization, whereas feeling more autonomous was negatively related to these variables” (p. 50). It seems that when people feel controlled, they experience being dehumanized and often respond by behaving in a less civilized, more antisocial manner. This was evidenced by the change in Lora's behavior after transfer.

An officer from BC had visited Lora while in segregation there and was shocked by how “low she had sunk” and that she felt so “bad about herself that she had tried to take her life.... I'd never known her as a cutter [she] was very embarrassed and very ashamed by it.”

The staff, who is named Aunty as a form of respect to an older Aboriginal woman, goes on to describe the situation:

And I could tell immediately, even going down there for the first time that it was very-, more militant of a setting than what [...] was. The staff had more of an edge to them and you could just sense it. You know, when Lora and I-, we were in the spirituality room talking and she was crying at this point, and she says you know, she goes these guards here are really mean. And she goes I've done some really bad things, Aunty. And she goes, it just drives me crazy, I can't take it here.... She goes, you know I'll ask them for a smoke and she goes they'll step on it and kick it under my door, right? And that's one thing with Lora, when I would talk to her and I needed to know the truth and she gave me her word, I knew that was golden. For some reason I knew that girl would never lie to me.

She had smeared fecal matter on her walls and thrown urine through the food slot at staff. The BC officer recalls feeling that it simply “wasn't safe” for her in that institution and hated leaving her there. “There are staff there who would remember Lora as being an evil person who was just wild, who they had no control over and very violent.” Hillbrand and Young (2008) and Jacobs (2005) recognize that despair resulting from hopelessness and a belief that there is nothing left to lose can become full-blown desperation. Paralyzing despair can result in externally directed aggression

toward a perceived offender, in this case the officers. They state that an essential goal for treatment must be to instill hope so as to contain the anger associated with despair and depression and that a central tenet for patient-centred care is upholding the values of autonomy, respect, self-direction, dignity, and hope so similar to those that should guide the women offender sector of CSC.

Stevens (2012) found that participants in her research described prior traditional prison settings that did not foster any hope for change or any grounds for hope: Once these same participants were residing in therapeutic communities within four different prisons they all reported feelings of autonomy and respect. They were fundamentally challenged to reconsider their view of who they were and invited in to an existential meditation on who they might dare to imagine they could become: "Hopelessness had been replaced by hope" (p. 14).

It was from the prairie institution that she was released to the community straight from solitary confinement being fed a diet of finger food, too dangerous for the prison but apparently not for the community. This was close to her final warrant expiry day and when the same officer from BC was sent to bring her to a halfway house in Vancouver she remembers Lora being in "emotional distress when she got into that vehicle." Lora told her that her older brother had been murdered and "nobody even bothered to try to make arrangements for me to go to the funeral." The death had occurred several days prior but the news withheld until the day of release. This gave the staff member cause for concern both for the inhumanity and also as she was now worried Lora could be a flight risk. However Lora did not run and in fact did not look back, she grieved and continued to look to the future.

A woman I worked with, and who Lora visited as a volunteer long after her release, stated to me that Lora gave her hope: “if Lora can do it, I know I can do it too.” A comment on the memorial leaflet (Appendix D) says, “One way Lora expressed her commitment to leave the world a better place than she found it was to ‘give back’ to the women who’d been with her through some of the darker moments in her own life.” A co-founder of the organization Lora started to help women in prison remembers,

that people may not have even known her, you know, that there’s this almost contagious spirit of Koala [Lora’s street name] that ... again, it’s like this hope, ... that women have when you mention Koala or Lora, you know ... do you learn hope, you know, did she teach hope. I think she was hope, you know. And so when you are holistically, ... living these values it permeates, you know.

***Reciprocal hope for staff.***

One other aspect to hope and hopelessness that is of importance is in how both are shared like a contagion throughout the prison. This form of hope is not lost on the staff who rarely are able to see the success stories but who seem to crave hearing news of the women who are doing well; many benefitted from seeing Lora’s visits to the prison. I am often asked by officers how a woman is doing that they may have connected with, and I make sure to share any news that I receive. The officer commented:

And you know she was one of those success stories that I love to see and hear and we don’t get enough of. How someone can be really hurt to their very core of how they are as a human being and still turn it around. And even when you’re faced then with your own mortality, say “how long do I need to survive ‘til my boy will know me,” ... she just touched so many lives, because she was really a prime example of a human being with determination and openness still, to change after everything she had gone through in her life.

The following story illustrates the importance of this connection and is told by the officer of her interactions with another young woman years later,

maybe that's why I kind of connected with her so much. Maybe it's ... she's reminding me of Lora, some of those qualities that she has. Like you know, she's strong-minded and a bit stubborn and a challenge, right, to work with. And to get to know her and to build that trust, and maybe she's reminding me of Lora. I can see that hope for her, too.... Everything is gangster, you know? And the first time I heard her play her guitar, I didn't see gangster, I saw [...]. Right? And then I knew we had that connection, right? That was the area we could work with... But I found [...] the woman in that lodge today. Not [...] the gangster, not the persona, ... I just was sitting beside a woman in the lodge today... And who she really is. I think that's what we're going to be able to tap into to find her and then to say okay, right? This is where we need to go, and this is who you really are. This is who your creator meant you to be.

The stress and toxic nature of the correctional environment when entirely based on a punishment model is treatment interfering. It is detrimental to the growth of prisoners and inordinately damaging to the health and wellbeing of correctional personnel who may not realize the deleterious effects to their own lives. The officer discusses the work environment:

We have incredible amounts of staff with post-traumatic stress disorder right now that are ill ... Yeah. In fact, a colleague and myself were joking this morning about gee, I wonder how many of us here are actually on antidepressants? That was this morning.... It's very wearing. And it's most disturbing to me when I can sit in my office and hear a human being banging their head on the cinder brick wall in the next room and it's just like a regular noise down there.... I was the tough prison guard, and 'til I started on my own healing journey and then became involved with actually trying to help people instead of just keeping them locked up, right?

### **Trust and timing.**

#### ***Trust.***

When Lora first arrived at BCCW she would address people by their title. She called out... "hey warden," who recalls,

I don't think she had a really good personal knowledge of what personal space is. I told her she needed to find somebody she could talk to because she made a comment about "I don't trust staff" and I think I challenged that ... and said there must somebody you can find here that you can trust... she was very much dug into the us versus them.

The officer also states that "Lora wasn't always very comfortable around women. ... she could be pretty reserved until she got to trust you. And that was the big thing. I think once she did trust you, she really trusted you." So the question is what is trust, how is it experienced, and how is it built? The officer proffers this possible answer:

I think it was a matter of people who were willing to-, first of all believe in her, probably for the first time in her life, and trust. And allowing yourself to be a bit vulnerable to her.... Because I think people who made the biggest impacts with Lora were actually really, - let down that-, I'll say that correctional guard and just looked at her, talked to her woman to woman.

Her sister recalls that "[s]he told me she didn't trust anybody" and it would seem reasonable considering not only her childhood but also her experiences with systems such as the following story, which may have also been a catalyst for her change.

About 2 weeks before Christmas Lora and I had been out for our run and when we returned both were feeling shaky and so shared a snack. As noon count was called and Lora returned to her unit she was in good spirits and left me with a smart remark and a laugh. However events soon changed and I was asked to help negotiate for her to walk herself to segregation as she had assaulted a staff on her unit and locked herself in her cell. The warden recalls this very important story of her emergent change:

I think one of the best examples was just before I left BCCW and at this point she had taken a number of programs and she was on the unit and at that point we had cameras in the common areas of the unit and there was a confrontation with an officer and she ended up being charged and placed in segregation and she was charged with assaulting the officer. So we kind of went hmm that's kind of not good and it doesn't sound like the progress our girl has made so we looked at the tape and what we saw was the officer step into Lora's personal space and we saw Lora step back and we saw the officer step into Lora's personal space again and we saw Lora step back and then we saw the officer raise her finger like she was pointing at Lora, pointing at Lora's face and start to wag her finger in Lora's face like you would a young child and literally it was like inches from Lora's face. We saw Lora step back and we saw the officer continue to step towards Lora and we

saw Lora continue to step back. And then we saw Lora step sideways in an attempt to leave the area where the officer was because the officer continued to be confrontational and move away from the officer and we saw the officer start to step in front of her to stop her from leaving and Lora brushed the officer's shoulder and the officer from that charged her with assault. There was no way, no way in hell that was an assault. We dropped the charges, we released Lora from segregation and we proceeded with discipline against the officer.

So to me that was Lora applying the skills she'd learned. The old Lora would have hauled up and socked her right in the face. She didn't make any mistakes that day in my mind. She never punched anybody in the face for not leaving her room again. You know it was those kinds of things where I saw her always trying. Now she was angry, she was upset, she figured that's it - I worked all this hard they're not going to believe me. You know it was that kind of thing I saw in her that reinforced with me that we were doing the right things with her.

It could have been one of the events that really helped Lora to trust in the possibility of being believed and of the potential to find fairness in this world. That officer was let go with no objection from the union.

***Timing.***

Lora demonstrated that she wanted to make changes; she wanted to take programs so long as they were Aboriginal, and she clearly told one of the facilitators that she would not be "therapized." The warden believed,

she was tired of the fight she was involved in... I don't know what it was about her... I knew she had had a lot of hardship in her life- but I know a lot of people who have had hardship in their lives. There was just something about her that said you know she needs a hand ... and I got the sense there hadn't been a whole lot of hands offered.

The timing was ripe for a person in authority such as the warden to say, "you don't have to keep doing this." The warden observes,

you get this sense where it's like oh please let it happen now because if it doesn't happen now we're going to have to wait for the next time and I've seen that happen before.... there were times you could see where a guy was ready and if the ducks didn't line up and that opportunity was missed that window closed and you lost him.



A woman in federal custody in 2008-2009 was working towards reuniting and bonding with her children. She was emotionally devastated by a change in policy that affected her potential visits with her children. Returning to her healing journey has taken several years after she realized the apparent hopelessness of her situation. This example is not an isolated or unusual circumstance of people losing hope and momentum or motivation for many and varied reasons, many of which could easily be averted.

### **Violence.**

Violence was a strong theme in Lora's life and of course brought her into custody many times. The question is to understand when this began and how it was perceived by those who knew her in childhood. During one of the interviews I asked a relative, "Would you say ... would you attribute the word 'bully' to her?" The response was clear:

No. She was just ... she was hurt ... And hurt people hurt people. I wouldn't call her a bully ... I never, ever would call her that, 'cause I knew her as a kid, right? And that's ... when I look at ... when I see and remember... I see pictures of her and I remember her, that's what I see, my little friend, my cousin, the person that put herself first to protect me.

Another cousin shares a similar sentiment. "I don't remember ever seeing her be violent when we were young." This person believed that Lora was acting out in fear and this idea was reinforced by the facilitator stating that Lora would go "passed her fear straight to anger." However, Lora says in a video interview that violence was glorified in her childhood and she learned that it would get her needs met and gain the respect and attention she sought.

Lora recalls,

I stabbed this girl 13 times. They, because she was insulting my mother... my mom would tell me stories about my brother's girlfriend insulting her. Verbally assaulting her, calling her bad names, saying all kinds of names to her, you know. Calling her, like, bitch, whore, slut, like, this is my mom! Like, I don't care what she's done to me but, yeah, I don't call anybody's mom that way. I wouldn't do that. Like, that was really awful to hear somebody, a daughter, a girl calling, I think it was the stories my brother used to tell, tell his girlfriends. Because my brother had a lot of resentments too, right.

Many years later her colleague considers her violence:

So, yeah, I mean, I knew that she could be hard core. You know, that's the breaks when you're surviving through life. I don't think that was innately her though, right? Like, again, that's something ... I don't want to say that you learn but you ... I think that was, you know, her defense. Like, I mean, you know her story, I mean, what else would you ... a person, a human do to do that?

The chaplain explains in an excerpt from his writing (Appendix E),

Modern brain science has revealed so much about the lasting negative affective and cognitive effects of trauma, its stress and the feeling of powerlessness over the invisible forces of change that Lora's community experienced. Lora learned to survive with an assaultive world view that implied that, ... this is a dangerous, changing, unpredictable, violent world, and if you don't come out fighting, they will get you first. "I don't really want to hurt anyone," she would say, "but what do you do when they come after you or threaten friends, you act instinctively.

She saw herself as a warrior, but that began to change as she entered her transitional years. "I always wanted people to know I was tough and brave."

***The mask.***

When Lora was in the Intensive Therapy Program for Female Offenders (ITPFO), the first iteration of dialectical behaviour therapy in correctional centres in Canada, I worked with her and the group every Friday. For a couple of weeks we worked to create a mask; this was actually constructed out of plaster of paris and made right on the face. I was not sure she would ever agree to do it, or that she would trust anyone to cover her face. However she did and I applied the material and let it harden as normal.

The interesting piece came during the decoration. The instructions were to paint or otherwise decorate the mask either in two halves or the inside and the outside showing the “past you” and the “future you.” Lora painted the mask with what she described and was evidently warrior paint. She hated it and towards the end of painting she could barely hold the paint brush pinching it at the very tip as though she wanted distance from the image she was creating. We discussed this and she spray painted over her work so she could re-do it. The end result was exactly the same image. She could not help herself. Her distance and disgust for the warrior paint speaks to the transformation she was moving toward in that she had all her life been attracted to the warrior “persona” and she had survived by acting like a man, “strong, violent and ruthless” in her own words, but it did not fit anymore.

I wanted to join the gang because I wanted to be anything other than a *girl*. I wanted to be accepted as part of a male group. I wanted to be classified as strong, violent, tough, ruthless. But that’s all changed. It’s been since 2000, ten years now, since I started changing.

She was strong and ruthless perhaps; but a *girl* nevertheless.

In 1990 CSC had realized the uniqueness of the needs of women in custody despite their presentation and released a document called “Creating Choices” laying out the requirements for Canada to build a prison system that could offer safe and supportive custody for federally sentenced women. It recommended that regional institutions be built rather than women being transferred to Prison for Women (P4W) inside Kingston Penitentiary in Ontario, often thousands of miles from their families. It also outlined the five guiding principles noted earlier that should drive the delivery of services

within this system: empowerment; meaningful and responsible choices; respect and dignity; supportive environment; shared responsibility.

The stories of others and from Lora herself have identified the presence of these principles during the time that she was a prisoner and under community conditions in British Columbia. Lora benefitted from a political season and a localized prison culture that took these principles very seriously. This exploration of Lora's life and in reflection on many other women's journeys through the system brings to light how easily an erosion of these ethics can occur. The impact on the women's behavior and health can be disastrous, arresting their ability to grow, change, and become valued citizens by desisting from crime rather than continuing to create havoc and fear.

### **Child welfare system**

Lora realized how much she was feared and knew that it played a role in how the ministry who took her son had perceived her. Experiences from Lora's childhood encounters with child welfare have been shared earlier in this paper but her connection to this system continued in BC when her son was born in 2006. The lawyer remembered the day that Lora called her office and although maintaining client confidentiality she stated carefully that "there was a reason she called me before he was born." Lora already knew the social worker was concerned and was adversarial with her immediately. They had become involved during the pregnancy through prenatal care as she was living on the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver a notorious area for poverty, homelessness, addiction and crime. The father still remembers when their son was born and the social worker entered the hospital room telling the parents that if they left the hospital with the baby it would be considered kidnapping and if

they left without him it would be considered abandonment. This was the beginning of a working relationship set up through an adversarial and threatening stance, that either way the ministry would get the baby. Lora discusses this:

I think the system's fear changes their MO. [modus operandi]. You fight the system on the inside, then you fight it on the outside; I didn't even know if I was coming or going. How do you deal with that when you get out? There's nobody there to help you. You have to talk to them and get them to feel at ease with you. They don't know them-self. They've only been educated. They've never walked the walk, and that ties into homelessness. Even going into a shelter I was afraid of them. I couldn't have got anywhere if it wasn't for my advocates speaking for me. There are barriers. Because they don't try to understand. They're fearing and they're not hearing. When you say, I just came from custody, they ask, for what? For violence; well, doors start closing. I know there's a big gap and I can see it but I don't know how to fix it to make it easier for the next person. If they had some help there would be more success. It's just finding that door to other women to make that change, that's the gap, the missing piece.

It was powerful learning to watch how on the one hand you can promote growth and development and on the other hand the young and inexperienced social worker set up an adversarial and destructive environment that made things more difficult. I am left to wonder what could have happened had there been a positive, non-threatening approach in the beginning that there's hope that she can be a good mother. I will never forget the helplessness and hopelessness of the day they took her baby. This is transcribed from my telling this story in an interview:

I was waiting outside the Britannia Community Centre to sign her up for a mother/baby program which I felt she needed. I remember wondering why I should have to take a morning off work to do this as surely the social worker could have organized such a program for her. I was just waiting to meet her and then I was going on to work when my cell phone rang and it was Lora: "I'm at the Ministry office and can you come and get me, they've taken baby" and I was just -- I was floored. I drove over there, obviously, and I went into this room and sat down with her and she's just shaking and then [the social work manager] pops his head in and says "can you get her out of here we need the room." This was probably about 11 o'clock in the morning and the little boy is two doors down the corridor and they won't let her say goodbye to him. We left the building, I'm not sure I would have

been able to walk out, and the best I could do was to suggest coffee. ... we sat there and we sat there for hours and she shook and shook and shook and I would say she didn't stop shaking for five or six hours that day.

For me it was the most incredible lesson on absolute helplessness and hopelessness because it didn't matter -- it wouldn't have mattered anything or how much money I had or what cheque I could have written or who I knew. Nothing that I could do or say that day was going to change what had happened and absolutely nothing that Lora could do or say was going to change it either. That's an experience of complete and utter helplessness that I've never had in my life before.

Many of the ministry workers I later discovered were horrified by how Lora's case was mishandled and the number of times that they [social worker and her manager] deliberately made it difficult, making her visits at a time of day which when she moved out to Abbotsford you know the only way to get there was to catch the five am bus [Greyhound] which meant she had like an hour and half to waste before the 45 minutes early that she would always be for every visit .... to clean up the room and make his bath. They've never known anybody else to bring a huge great Rubbermaid Tote in and make a bath for their baby with warm water and olive oil and play with him as Lora believed a mother should. The last words that [the social worker] said to me before I saw her in court was "I'm 99% sure I'm going to get this baby", like he was a possession that would be won.

The warden who was a witness at the 11-day trial for permanent custody said after Lora's cancer diagnosis, "It's so sad you know and I think that's what makes me the angriest, I think, about the whole thing, was the time that they stole from her." Her cancer was diagnosed within months of the court-ordered return of her son, having been in care for 18 months. The judgment is 40 pages long describing in detail where the law was contravened.

The warden continued,

she asked me if I was surprised that she was a mother and I said no I wasn't and she kind of looked at me and she says "well I didn't think I'd ever be a mother" and I said well I'm not surprised by seeing you as a mother, I said that's always been part of your problem quite frankly is that you take care of everybody and not necessarily for the right reasons.

And then one of the observations I had was how she would look around and see some of the other kids especially when she was living in Mission and talk about how their mothers didn't mother properly and how they weren't taking proper care and that mother spends her money on bingo and doesn't feed her son or her

daughter properly and this mother here drinks too much and she actually phoned the Ministry of Children and Families on a couple of families which kind of made me smile a bit because I thought holy smokes after the deal you had with Ministry of Children and Families that surprises me that you would do that...there was a whole lot of stuff that went on during that period of time that I think was interesting and I don't know if you'd call it transformative but certainly was part I think of the continued growth of Lora. You know just the fact that she as I say felt so strongly about how some people didn't appreciate their children or didn't take proper care of them or when she talked about some of the women who were still in jail or had just been released from jail and had their children and how they continued on with their addiction and didn't put their children first and how intolerant she was of that was quite interesting.

An acquaintance from prison days commented that "she became humble for that kid."

The friend asks,

When we talked earlier about the attachment theory and how it's impossible to give out love when you haven't received love, and when you think about that, it's sort of like where did she get the capacity for loving her son?... Because she did love her son in just a totally amazing way, and she got the capacity for that from somewhere, you know.

A response from another interviewee present was, "Oh, I think she got it from... I mean; your unconditional love for her too was unbelievable." Lora taught us all that learning to love yourself from the unconditional love of others and having a child can heal attachment wounds and support maternal nurturing.

### **Community / Social System**

The friend who supported Lora until her death remembers these difficulties she discussed and that she faced in the community at large.

Yeah, and she didn't live in our world, so she... we fought those battles because she did face prejudice on many levels, but we also fought those battles because she didn't know how to live in our world to smooth the waters.

She described to me in a conversation that when she was meeting friends at a well-known chain restaurant, having arrived early, she sat down and ordered a cup of

coffee. She was required by the waitress to pay for it before she could be served. Her friends duly arrived, ordered their food, and paid as they left. She recounted this story without any surprise but simply the question, "why do people gotta be that way?"

There are multiple other examples in many situations and various settings of ignorance causing racism: Ignorance in the true meaning of a complete lack of knowledge of the uniqueness of Aboriginal worldview and the systematic destruction of their culture over hundreds of years.

### **Cancer and the Medical System**

Lora went three times to see her female family physician in Vancouver complaining of a painful breast lump. This began during the time that her son had been removed into the care of the ministry. Eventually soon after he was returned she went to a walk-in clinic and a male doctor said he should examine the lump and found a leaking nipple and a large mass. Two days later a mammogram revealed a tumor which when removed measured over 8 centimeters in diameter and all 32 lymph nodes removed were malignant. Soon after this, tumors in her spine were found and the prognosis at this time was perhaps 2 years if she was lucky. Her son was a little over 2 at the time and recently reunited. She asked me how old a child needed to be to have a good memory and I told her about 6. She died 4 years later when he was 6 ½.

One of Lora's journal entries is poignant as she tries to understand the hierarchical nature of the medical system. "All the doctors come in but they never tell their name," as though they have a right to all her intimate information and she can know nothing of them. She goes on to lament that they never explain things to her as though she could not understand and this makes her very angry at times. She wanted to know and



wanted them to do everything possible for her to live as long as she could, adamant that the pain and sickness was nothing and that she should be the one to decide when enough was enough. As with everything else in her life Lora wanted to know and understand all aspects of her illness, so when a friend introduced her to a woman who also had cancer she asked a lot of questions. What is of interest is her area of curiosity:

Not so much the mechanical kind of questions about how does this work, but more questions that were getting at how do you have the courage to carry on? Those were not the exact words, but that's the kind of things she was getting at. ... seemed to me like she was just gathering in stores for the winter, you know; like the winter that was approaching in her life.

She was very thoughtful in who she spent time with and who she sought for support on her journey. The father of her son recalls the last week of her life:

Her eyes already told me that she was going to die, right? I'm not coming back. That's how you could read her. And I phoned 911 and they came. And me and my little boy were sitting on the couch. You know mom never went out on a stretcher. She walked out-, she walked right to the ambulance. She... After they took her, I looked at my little boy and says, remember that day that mom was talking to you about? He says yeah. I said well it's almost here, buddy. I said you know what now? I'm going to tell you right now, mom's not coming back. He says yeah. And it's hard. I remember her-, I took her boy to see her 6 days before she passed away, and have pictures of the last time she held her baby. And when I left, because I had to go to work, and he went-, he left me in the dust like he always does, and she looked at me, she says Stew, don't bring him back here. Okay. And I never said nothing, I just said okay.

That's the last time she held her boy.... Before that-, six days before she told me Stew, don't bring him back and make me proud. That's what she tol' me. And I told her, you know, and it still affects me because I knew, I could feel her trying to get up, you know that? She didn't want to go. Long time, too. I even told her, I says Ma, you know what? If I could take your place I would leave right now. Because words is very important, and it was very important from the start that his first word was mom, because I did not have my biological mother, right? And it was very important that his first words that came out of his mouth was mom. And it was, right? ... I was in so much shock and turmoil. And all of a sudden it occurred to me, my girl's naked somewheres and I've got to find clothes for her. That was hard. And that was the hardest thing I ever did, but I made her look good.

Lora's mother, who was deceased by the time Lora passed, had recommended she be cremated before flying her home for burial because of the costs of flying the body. In the end the Chief of her Band paid for Lora's coffin and her partner and son to fly home where Lora was buried close to her grandfather in Collins (*Namaygoosisgagun*).

**CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS AND THE QUALITIES THAT EMERGED**

When Lora gained hope that her life could exist beyond 35 and that she could stay out of prison for more than 6 months, she began a journey of transformation that was remarkable. What emerged from the data to support future clients are a number of characteristics, traits, skills, and strengths we need to search for, nurture, and build on in order to encourage hope and an engagement with transformational learning. Digging deep in the stories that recount parts of Lora's life has revealed a number of these qualities, and strengths of significance.

**Curious and critical thinker.**

Although these are unique aspects of cognition they also have a commonality. Lora was curious and questioned everything and, as Mezirow (1991) says, emancipation is found in curiosity and questioning, not through indoctrination. However, this can be a source of difficulty especially for women in prison as noted by the lawyer.

And so when she says something that is expressing herself in a way that might not be seen as appropriate... they might feel threatened and so they are trying to find a way of .. to lock her up and segregate her.. to shut her down.... Boundaries around safety is a projection and is so subjective.

The reaction to this honesty and to questioning decisions is heavily dependent on the individual staff.

The warden remembers that Lora "was so willing to find ways to work through issues and the more skills she developed as she took programs and worked on herself the better she became at finding ways to work through issues." The colleague in her prison work describes her as a "[c]ritical thinker, right?" She would explore all avenues of a problem she looked at and would ask everyone,

“So what do you think?” ... “What do you think?” ... She would make sure that we did, sort of, if you will, the circle because she knew that we had to work together ... she was a critical thinker and that she was never fearful of using her life experience. ... It's like how do we work with the system and ... so, absolutely, she was always very, very respectful and, again, wanting to hear the other side, you know.

She wanted to gather all the opinions she could to be able to contemplate an issue from all sides and possibilities. The facilitator recalls even in 2001,

Which shows you that it's - a very open mind, wanting to have more, you know, that she did-, she never took a position of knowing-, knowing it all and closing her mind to other peoples understanding of the world, and I saw that in group as well, she was always curious about other people. Which is-, was flattering to other women, you know that she would want to know about them. It was flattering to me as a group leader, some of the things she wanted to know.

Lora was genuinely interested in people and observant of her world.

The chaplain remembers her sense of humour and her “search for those sacred relations to the land and its culture and peoples.” He recognized in her an “Aboriginal epistemology; for her truth and knowledge are relational.” Her colleague states that she had a core worldview an “Indigenous worldview or transformative worldview, where you see conflict as an opportunity to change, right? Not ... as being something negative or to put down but, you know, how do we allow people's voices?” It was recognized that she understood that “conflict created dialogue, it created opportunity, right?” She was always asking the question, “how is this going to work for the women?” This however is challenging for others for whom conflict is usually avoided and differences closed down often prematurely. The facilitator speaks to the challenge being

one of understanding Lora at a much deeper level because she presented even in the early days as an individual with tremendous depths and you wouldn't say that in the sense of depths of clarity. It was more that there was an innate wisdom within her.

There was this sense of seeing the world from a quizzical perspective, from a humorous perspective and from ...with great intelligence.

This aspect of Lora was only evident if she was truly seen: Searching beneath the bandana and beyond the façade of masculine clothing and sometimes a threatening stance.

### **Experiential learner.**

Lora describes her need to understand. It was not enough to read or hear about something she was interested in she had to try to experience it. There are many descriptions of Lora's creativity as a child inventing games, building forts and furniture in the snow, and as her sister recalls, "all her ideas." This is consistent with the Indigenous way of learning that of the earth showing you the way, by doing as well as hearing the storied lived experience. It is relevant in considering rehabilitation, reentry, or redefining a sense of self and supports the need for learning opportunities that are experiential and activity based. Women have commented many times on the role-plays they are required to do in prison programs which seem so irrelevant to them and often do not translate well into community settings.

But anyways, ... ended up on the street that night just 'cause I wanted to see how it would feel to be out on the street in the middle, why, I don't know. Because that's just me. And so I really felt that feeling, you know, that like how can, yeah, how can you actually go out there and feel like you belong to something? How can you actually go around this world and feel like you belong to something? And so, yeah, I don't know what was my motive for that. But I knew that I wanted to, I was looking for an answer. And I wasn't sure if I'd gotten it or if I did get it or, all I know is I just wanted to feel homeless.... You know, to have nothing. Yeah, even though that I felt I never belonged anywhere in the first place so I think I wanted to feel that again. I wanted to remember that feeling.... And so I took \$10 with me that night and I left the rest of my money in my bag at [...] place because I wanted to see how it feel like it be \$10. And it was actually quite saddening. Because the lady that was out on the street that night on that she was drunk and that she was drunk and that she was a [...]. It was one of the [...] kids's moms. ... so I gave her

my ten bucks because she was drunk and she wanted to get to the other end of town. And so I gave that cab or I gave the ten bucks to the cab and I told her, here: I said this all I got. It was kind of funny. Well, there wasn't kind of funny because it was kind of sad to see that. To actually know this is the society that I live in, you know. That nobody's going to come is when you want help. That nobody's going to be there to help you out if you need help. Yeah, and that's sad. Yeah. I knew that then and so why don't I believe it still today? I don't know because I'm dumb and stupid. ... Why would anybody want to be homeless but I did it. I did that for no reason at all. Just for my own self was all, before my own gratification I guess. Because I wanted to know how this, oh, I don't know if I wrote this right. I don't know. I don't think anybody's going to like my stories.

An interesting observation from this small excerpt of Lora telling her stories is the questioning of "doing it right." It is reminiscent of the passage from Freire (2007):

Self-depreciation is another characteristic of the oppressed, which derives from their internalization of the opinion the oppressors hold of them. So often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything—that they are sick, lazy, and unproductive—that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness. (p.63)

How can it be wrong when you are telling your own story? It is an example of how she tried to straddle two cultures and make her worldview and experiences open to others but with trepidation of judgement.

Here is another example of her need to make sense of life experiences that she had not personally explored; this one shares her ruminations on her possible career exploration:

I tried prostitution. But the guy that picked me up and whoever did try to pick me up basically said that I wasn't prostitution material or something. I don't know. Yeah. I don't know. Prostitution material.... And so the guy, and so I ended up sitting at the bar at The Occidental and just waiting for the girls to come into the bar. And so I'd hang onto their money. Because I wasn't a good prostitute and so the girls knew that and I guess the two or three guys that did pick me up said the same thing. The one guy actually gave me twenty bucks because I just made up some big story that I needed the money anyways and so he gave me twenty bucks and he dropped me back off. And, yeah, I don't know. But he told me not to try prostitution again because it wasn't my field.... Yeah. I guess I ask too many questions. I guess my main objective was like what I, what do we do now, like,

where do we go? You know, I was their aggressor. I wasn't, I guess I wasn't, I don't know how you become a prostitute but the questions I asked him was like, so anyways, how many times do you pick up girls and do you know, what's your name? And so, yeah, I'm just new to Manitoba and, you know, I just need some money. You know. Even though I didn't need the money, I was just curious, right, as to what those girls do out there.

There were a number of instances where in program Lora would challenge a concept and I would find a way to demonstrate, rather than explain again. I believe this was important in building her trust in exploring new ways of seeing her behavior and building goals for a different future. Therapeutic recreation is primarily focused on quality of life and leisure skill development while layered with learning social and emotional skills, improving physical health, and connecting to the spiritual domain.

**Courageous and resilient.**

*Courage, for one thing; amazing courage. (the friend)*

That Lora was courageous is without question; that she was resilient is dependent on how resiliency is defined. The emerging view described in the literature review recognizes the broader parameters of resilience and that it may be embedded in the ways we narrate our lives, making sense of our predicaments, and mapping future possibilities. According to the lawyer who represents many street-entrenched people:

People who have had a really hard life are amazingly resilient and show resistance in ways that we might not approve of but they have amazing strength and so if you can turn that vision around to see as strength, then connect, there is hope, there is possibility and a way to connect relationship and therefore everyone will be more safe and more secure and better.

Seeing strength in certain behaviours is difficult sometimes but vital to opening the door for a learning alliance.

The colleague was interested to learn during the interview that Lora found comfort and strength in knowing the characteristics and identity of herself as Bear Clan. She recognized in Lora the qualities of the bear and goes on to explain the design on her own wedding ring:

I chose the bear because my ... the teachers in my life have taught me or shared with me that one way of looking at the bear spirit or the bear symbol is a symbol of family, and a symbol of protection and courage.... And that's the family piece. So, absolutely... You know, courage, protection and family is definitely her spirit.

The facilitator during her incarceration had this to say about

her early background, the values that she brought around her family, around protection of family, of people that you love and around really what it means to be violated and because so many of those women had been violated but to Lora there was a very clear path to be followed when one has been violated and it came not from a rational sense of knowing. It came from a very deep place of knowing that the injury was so profound that she would need to do something about that for her own self-respect.

The lawyer describes her first impression: "something about her ... self advocacy that I admired and that continued the whole time.... It wasn't about herself it was about her unborn child and later about her baby." There was hesitancy when she was advocating for herself but when she was standing up for her "son or others, it was all out, no hesitation, all out ... outrage sometimes."

Lora had a set of values, some healthy and constructive, and some not so positive. She had a set of coping strategies and a hard-working disposition learned from her grandfather. She spoke her traditional language. These are all competencies and protective factors necessary to qualify for the Indigenous approach to resiliency, knowing that this can only be conceived when occurring in the presence of adversity. This conceptualization of resiliency also shares the notion that a child's environment



embedded in his or her social ecology will bear heavily on the positive outcome potential (Ungar, 2008). Therefore serious attention must be paid to the structural deficiencies in our society and the social policies that children such as Lora are so vulnerable to. Ungar (2008) cites Seccombe (2002) who says clearly that it will be more beneficial to change the odds rather than resourcing the children to beat the odds; it is the community that must be resilient as much or more so than the child.

McGuire (2010) puts forward the notion that Anishenaabe resilience could be considered to be based on cultural ideas and traditions about place and a sustained relationship with the land. Therefore this knowledge of place is closely linked with knowledge of self. Lora commented in a video interview that she could not understand how anyone could be lost in the bush; it was the place she felt safe, at home, known and understood, roaming her grandfather's trapping lines.

Lora's courage re-emerged when she was finally able to get out into nature, growing from that very first ETA absence running along the river to boating with her friend, described as "healing for her soul or balm to her soul, you know ... being in nature." Lora may not have followed the straight and narrow path to a resilient adulthood but perhaps we could describe her as typical of the developmental understanding of resilience processing over a life span.

Lora's courage was not only in the protection of others as is spoken of by people from her childhood many times but also for facing her own difficulties and mistakes so many people remarked that she was able to "pick herself up, dust herself off, and keep on going." The warden recalls,

and as I say whether it was “alright I made a mistake and here we go again back in segregation” you know there was no sort of giving up on herself. That’s what I saw, she was always willing to sort of say “take a deep breath, alright I screwed up” and I mean she told me once “I always took responsibility for what I did” and she did.

The lawyer observed that Lora was always true to herself: “I didn’t ever see her put her identity aside ... you know ... to be someone else.” She was always able to express herself and “kept adapting” and taking responsibility which fits with the earlier statement from Four Arrows et al. (2010) that healing is about telling your own truth.

Lora never expressed the fear of anything while in prison according to the facilitator:

I don’t believe I ever saw her express fear about anything in that group which is like unusual. People usually at some point are able to recount some aspect of their lives that maybe they can’t say the words or define it but you can see that that situation caused them a lot of fear. When Lora spoke about her past she didn’t verbalize the fear part and yet you knew. You knew you could have pictured a little girl being in a school room and stuttering and have the teacher say some very mean things to her that they would have been a sense of powerlessness there and maybe and fear but I don’t know that she-, maybe she just went from the pain to the anger so quickly without going through the fear stage. This is pure conjecture on my part.... That-, the fear didn’t immobilize her in ways that it immobilized other people.

Fear and hope are said to be opposite emotions or perhaps they are dialectical. They can both exist in time and space, and in reading the rapid shifting in Lora’s writing and hearing it in her conversations she would shift from one to the other very quickly almost holding them simultaneously. In her final writing she speaks about her fears of dying often but also quickly assures us that she is not scared:

Am I afraid? Damn right I’m scared. I wanna cry, scream, yell, kill someone, fight, pull my hair out. But I don’t say anything just hold it in, where it’ll eat at the side of my ribs maybe that’s why they hurt so much.... Probably not.

Even towards the end of her life when she knew she was dying she wanted to keep doing her volunteer work as long as possible. Special permission had to be granted for her to enter the prison with a morphine patch and her walker but she was not able to take her break through pills and would suffer in silence until she could leave and reach her breakthrough pain medication in a locker at the principal entrance. The colleague remembers,

I don't even think I can express that.... like, she knew she was sick, we knew she was sick, you know, but ... I don't know, I don't want to say it didn't change anything 'cause I felt like it didn't, you know, like, ... she was there and she would speak about it.... and she would talk about her meds but so matter-of-factly, you know, and ... so that's the courage piece.... the courage of continuing to move forward with her goals and her life.

She had the courage to do so, to always be moving forward, without complaint. Many times I found myself in emergency or the chemotherapy unit as she struggled with pain and nausea but as she shared with the warden,

“you know I had to deal my whole life with my mother..” because by this time her mom had died and she said “she dealt with a whole lot of pain and she made everybody miserable around her” and she said “I just choose not to do that”. She said “I choose to have the people around me remember me not as being the complainer and not having them to ...”, how did she put that, “not having them put up with my pain and listen to me moan and complain and remember nothing but that part of it, I want them to be happy and remember me being happy so I deal with it” and I thought -- I was blown away.

At one point Lora was discussing her frailty with the female friend and she apparently commented,

“I couldn't fight right now. You know, like, what would I do, because I couldn't fight right now”; you know, like she wouldn't be able to win a physical fight and it was just sort of astounding to her; it was sort of like she had no weapons left if she couldn't win a physical fight. Because she wore that image as a protection... protection for her and for those that she loved. ... because it was a self-discovery thing; it's like how ironic is that; that's been my protection all along, that I could take anybody out, so don't stand in my way....But it was also a... almost kind of a

pleasure in it, you know. It's like mmm, that's amazing; I can't fight anymore and that can be okay, you know. Like there was that piece of it, because she didn't have to fight

The observation of courageous, resilient, and determined nature comes through in these comments by the male friend and then the warden shares, "she didn't know how to say die; she didn't know how to say quit. And no matter what she faced in our world that was so foreign to her, she was just constantly going forward."

The warden also says,

I have no doubt at all in my mind that she could do anything she set her mind to and I mean how that woman kept going as long as she did I have no idea. You and I both know what she looked like at the end and it was nothing other than sheer will and determination that kept her alive that last year, nothing.

Her lawyer commented that she always saw her as strong, even as a baby or child. Her observation of support is powerful: "we are all vulnerable but there are circumstances where we can sort of float along and take someone's problems with us and then there are times we may need that from them." Lora was able to do both.

### **Spiritual.**

*I'm not scared of death, because I know we don't just die our lives continue on, on, on again where it ends nobody knows. (Excerpt from Lora's writings)*

The chaplain recalls her as "a deeply wounded yet spiritual person, searching for a sense of purpose and meaning in life." He worked with Lora informally as she would drop by his office in BCCW. She left a lasting impression because 10 years after he last saw her he still remembers:

Lora, as I sensed was searching for a deep connection to home, and to being at "home" with herself? She seemed close sometimes. In her search she had vague memories in her soul, imprinted by her creator, positive imprints of shadows of her

culture, and a deep sense of inner spirituality: a sense of holistic relational connection.

The officer agrees with this:

She knew her language, she knew her culture, and she knew her teaching. And that one really impressed me about Lora right away, because so many of our women that come into prison know virtually nothing about who they are as Aboriginal women, which is very sad. But Lora actually did know that... It's you know, when you sit there and you talk about the teachings with her, she would just suck it in and yet at the same time she could say something that she had loved from her own teachings when she was growing up... But you know even when we'd go in the ceremonies, she knew the proper protocols in all-, again, she was a girl who was taught the right way, and somewhere along that way that little girl really got hurt bad and her violence came out with her rage. But I started to see that little girl again.... Maybe that was because she was partially that old spirit.

In accordance with an Indigenous spirit, Lora was recognized by her colleague: "her living, her living, a way of being, a way of knowing, a way of seeing that's more collective, right?" and that "she had a sense of the energy in the room."

Two people, a husband and wife, who befriended Lora spoke of their connection and why it seemed so special. Here is an excerpt from their conversation as Lora questioned their practice in Christianity: "she saw it as being a White Man's religion and she didn't know how it fit into her identity," but

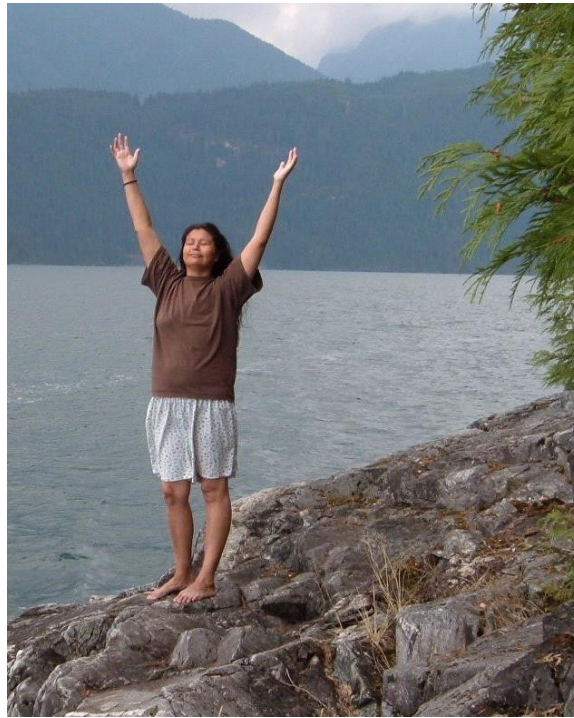
Our relationship was not so much about words; it was more about presence and where we could take her to that was healing for her soul or balm to her soul, you know. And being in nature, like going out to Kilby: That was probably the only thing that we could have done for her that day that would provide some soothing to her soul, right?

The day he is remembering was the first time I took her son to live with a cousin on Vancouver Island, while she faced her cancer. On that day she believed her son would not return to live with her again.

Yeah, her healing seemed to be when she could see the beauty of nature. I never forgot her standing in the boat, her arms out sideways, standing in the boat, just...

It was cold, but she loved it, the wind in her face. I think embracing... embracing the outdoors, embracing the creation. It seems like we're all --- creation; I think it's just --- I think it was in many respects it was embracing the Creator as she related to Him through the creation, right.

There are many photographs of Lora with her arms raised high and also of her deliberately coaching her son in this stance.



*Figure 3. Lora hands raised*

### **Teacher and mentor.**

*Ge Gii izhi gikinoo'amawind (Anishenaabemowin)  
That which one learns so will one do in life. (McGuire, 2010, p. 118)*

The chaplain explained,

I consider her my mentor. Her story motivated me to search for and discover the deep spiritual importance of traditional Aboriginal ancestral lands and cultures of Canada, especially the Ojibwa lands of Lora's ancestors.... Knowing her, I formed an existential "relationship" with the effects of colonisation, and of the industrialization of North Western Ontario. Her personality and her story affected me deeply early in my career as prison chaplain. She helped me see; perhaps I helped her find some sense of inner worth.

There were very few men that Lora trusted and this relationship between such different people demonstrates the need to have kind and gentle healthy men working in women's prisons. This is a contentious issue often discussed in the system and not universally agreed to.

There was an issue with a woman associated with the collective and Lora felt certain she was planning to bring drugs into the institution; her way of dealing with this is consistent with teaching through experiences, rather than punishment:

That was never Koala's vibe. What it was, was like, okay, she's potentially going to do something that's going to risk the collective so we need to remove her, you know, not remove her ... but, you know, dialogue with her, explain to her why.

Lora [aka Koala as she would often say] was a force to be reckoned with and was sometimes seen as threatening but "she had the ability to see the people who were there for non-collective or non-collaborative purposes." This went against "[h]er living, a way of being, a way of knowing a way of seeing that's more collective, right?"

She would roll in there, she would say a few things, she would listen a lot. You know, that was the other thing why she's a good teacher, you know, is that ... the saying of two ears and one mouth to listen twice as much as you speak and she was a really good listener. ... So for me it would be, you know, family, protection, courage, and teacher ... You know, I was very humbled to be her student or her learner - she'd say, "Oh, we're teachers together," you know.

Lora once commented that my role was to interpret this White world she was trying to live in and I remember saying that in return "you help me by sharing your Indigenous worldview with me." She had a way of sharing some horrendous life experiences as though they were just another day. The colleague says about her,

for someone to, I think, speak about traumatic experiences in a way that she did when ... you know, how was she able to transform that, you know, how was she able to ... be able to speak about, you know, terrible, terrible things in a teaching way ... you could argue, you know, she was a teacher and she brought light.

Lora was also always a learner and was highly motivated for her son to learn about both worlds that he was growing up and living in. A friend recalls,

she had a goal in mind that day, and the goal was that [...] was to teach Stewart how to make a fire. And so that's why there's all those pictures of [...] chopping up the kindling and Stewart helping him put the kindling in the thing and what not. But it's all about experiential learning, of course.

Lora also wrote about teaching her son:

I'm not scared of dying leaving my son is what bothers me because he's just a child. He listens when you make things into a game, I do that. I am scared to let him go. I know he's in good hands but a mother always worry.

Another example of how she lived her teaching was her capacity for honesty in sharing her perceptions and ideas. Sometimes brutal honesty but mostly shared with humour or in such a way that you could not help but take it for what and how she meant it to be: helpful. The colleague recalls, "she was again passing on that critical piece, 'cause she was always straight up, like, there was no ... you know, there was no messing around." As the friend agrees, "she called it what she saw; I mean, there was no... the way she saw it, the way she called it and you know again, most of us are more reserved and we hold back, but there was no holding back." The colleague remembers her as "[r]eally wise, you know, very, very wise...the Elder stage, you know, when she was, you know, quite young when she died, right?" Perhaps this essence is why she was able to share her thoughts so candidly.

*"She was a teacher, she was a friend, you know, she was a colleague" (the colleague).*

### **Volunteer and change agent.**

*"She always had the vision of change for the better" (the colleague).*



From early childhood she was interested in the protection and care of others. This manifested in some violent and inappropriate actions over the years but eventually led to her volunteer work both in the institution and the community. The facilitator recalls her having “a strong sense of justice about things and what she recognized.” She had a shared recognition of experiences with other women:

I don't think that she ever maybe saw herself as being the only one who ever had that kind of pain. There's a kind of universal pain in being victimized and when you start to realize that there are so many other people around you that have suffered that pain which clearly for her led to a route of helping others--Who were being victimized and wanting to change the situation and having the skills to do it. She'd made herself a fierce powerful lady. You would not want her as an enemy.

The colleague explained,

one of her goals perhaps ... and I'm speaking hypothetically 'cause I wish I could ask her now ... was to inspire others. You know, was to inspire well-being, was to inspire a sense of community, was to inspire change. But not only change but to realize that you can be a change agent or an agent of change, right?

When her diagnosis was confirmed it was as though the colleague commented that “you know this fire inside of her was even stronger, right? ... She was definitely there for what the women needed, you know.”

In a discussion with the warden reflecting on Lora and her commitment to the enormous value she held in her volunteer work, the warden responded,

Oh yeah, absolutely. She was so proud of that. If you think about, just what you said talking about the volunteer stuff, the work that Lora did with [...]. You know I mean here was another woman that we got and when I first met her I thought oh yeah here we go again Lora II. And you know if anything she was more entrenched in the ‘us really hate you’ kind of crap and I remember we were sitting there talking one day about you know how do we break down some of this crap and I thought I know how we do that, we get somebody who's been there and done that to start talking to her and said so how do you feel about Lora coming in and talking with her, ‘would she do that’ and I said I can ask her.

Part of the value that Lora brought to those visits with [...] was sharing her story and experience with the culture and the “con code.” She demonstrated the ability to trust.

The culture actually varies from day to day, depending on what is happening that day and the internal and external pressures that might exist. Offenders have an unwritten code of conduct which is definitely more apparent in a maximum security institution. The code particularly recommends that an offender mind his or her own business and not interfere with what other offenders are doing (“does their own time”). Lora was given advice by an older woman when she first came in: “yeah and ... as for I met this lady she tol’ me, don’t see nothing, don’t hear nothing, don’t know nothing and always stand up for yourself.”

Lora was able to recognize the fallacy of the code and the notion of family within the gang world. She shared that with [...] in a way that no staff could ever be heard or taken seriously. Significant in this is Lora’s ability to move beyond what has been done to her, take responsibility for what she has done, and at least forgive *the other*. Forgiving herself was another matter.

### **Forgiving.**

Many stories from family members and others have described Lora’s ability to move beyond being a victim and finding a way to forgive and be empathetic to others’ experiences. None is more compelling than the following story told by the warden and witnessed by myself. It took place in the offices where her son had been taken about 2 years after he had been returned by the court:

I mean I knew we were going to a ceremony that the [...] was putting on and you know that she was going to speak but when she came out with that I was just floored that she held no ill will towards these two people that I hold ill will

towards.... Because of what they did to her and Junior and she stands up and thanks them, you know I was just like wow you know.... For teaching her that she had issues that she needed to work on and making her realize that and for teaching her how important her son was to her and that she needed to address those issues and it was like wow.... What she went through back then, I cannot imagine and yet she stood up three years later, four years later and said "thank you, I forgive you."

I believe that this ability to forgive was founded in her capacity for empathy and compassion. She was even able to find forgiveness for the doctor who neglected to diagnose her cancer who phoned Lora many times to apologize once she found out the diagnosis. Lora could well have sued for malpractice but having considered it briefly she believed it would hold her in the anger and negativity and decided to let it go.

What was so hard was for her to forgive herself; shame and guilt are powerful emotions to live with and very familiar in the work with women in prison. Maruna (2001) found that the 30 *desisters* in his study had all established a coherent and forgiving narrative, positively reinterpreting their past as a false identity, while creating a new and generative script. Lora believed she had violated her relatives trust by getting drunk with and possibly sleeping with the father of her relative's child. Her relative recalls that when she reconnected with Lora there was a lot of silence:

So she finally started opening up and the first thing she said to me was, "I'm sorry," and that confused me. And she ... and I said, "Why are you sorry to me?" And then she mentioned my daughter's dad situation. I said, "Oh, you know, I never thought about it after. I got on with my life. I never even ..." She said, "I carried that. I still carried it," she said, "I carried it 'til now," she said, "'til I'm talking to you. I felt bad about it."

And she was crying when she was telling me this, in the hospital. She was in the hospital. And I sat there and I listened to her. And then I told her, I said, "Thanks for apologizing." I said, "That means a lot to me." I said, "But the same time," I said, "I never held anything against you, all these years." And then she went to talk about how she was being punished and all the bad things she did to people and ..."

Shame induces a feeling of being a bad person, while guilt is related to the understanding of having done a bad thing. They result in very different outcomes on recidivism. Maruna (2001) found that those who *desisted* from crime did not attempt to deny or hide their pasts. Guilt is associated with a reduction in recidivism whereas shame has no deliberate effect, as guilt will cause a person to hide while shame may cause an externalization of blame and a defensive response. “Thus, “guilt-inducing, shame-reducing” interventions guided by restorative-justice principles may be especially promising for reducing criminal recidivism and for enhancing post-release adjustment in the community” (Tangney, Stuewig, & Martinez, 2014, p. 5).

Lora had talked to me about restorative justice (RJ) but said that she understood why the family of the boy who died and the one who ended up in a wheel chair would never want to do that. She also understood why the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) never wanted her back in Thunder Bay. She believed also that her cancer was in some way how she would have to pay for her past and so it seems that her ability to really forgive herself was fleeting and unstable. I told her that RJ is more than *victim offender mediation* and she could restore balance in many other ways. She certainly worked hard to restore the balance through her service work but for her it seems it was not enough.

### **Empathic.**

An acquaintance who served many years with Lora and also time in the community afterwards discussed Lora's issue with teasing or humiliating of women who were vulnerable in the prison. “She didn't like a lot of people, but when she friended you ... that was everything.” Lora did not tolerate weak or disabled offenders being bullied.

It was unique for a woman to return to the prison setting after release and especially in a supportive and helping role. As noted by the colleague “maybe because of the time that she spent in prison she came to empathize with some of the challenges that the employees face as well, right?” The toxicity of the system and what that did to staff as well as inmates was not lost on Lora.

During the last few years of our journey together my husband was progressing in his own health issue. Unless she was really upset by something Lora would always ask at the beginning of our call or conversation “so, so, and so, how’s Kevin doing?”

The friend recalls this also:

she was worried, really worried about me and not herself and I said “Don’t worry about me what about you? It was like, I’m worried about her, and she’s worried about me.... There wasn’t a time I ever talked to Lora... -- she’d say “how are you doing? Are you feeling all right?” You know, that was pretty amazing when you think of the pain she was in and everything else and that’s the first question she would ask.... I always was amazed at that. I actually didn’t know how to answer it; I mean; it just was beyond me.... Yeah, and I had a few health problems at the time and she... That’s not something a lot of people do when they’re self-absorbed, so that tells me she wasn’t fully self-absorbed by any means.

This piece is interesting to consider as there were more than a few staff who considered Lora to be a psychopath. Labels can be very dangerous especially when misunderstood and misused.

### **Inspiring hope.**

*“There was still a self within Lora that was never going to sort of walk away from that kind of abuse and that kind of shone in that group, it really did” (the facilitator).*

The colleague talks about an

almost contagious spirit of Koala ...one of her goals was to inspire others. I think. ... Do you learn hope, you know, did she teach hope, I think she was hope, you know -- this story of transformation, and.... You know like how’s she doing it, they

wanted to know and she wasn't afraid to share that. ... cause, right they want to keep it to themselves. But that wasn't her.... you can have these brilliant people in our lives but they don't share.

I hear all the time today, "Oh, I'm doing this because of Koala," or, "I'm doing this for Koala." You know, so many women are setting foot on their transformation either because of Koala ... or in her honour, for her child, you know. So I think not only is this a story of, like, self-transformation of Koala, like, you were just saying that, you saw it permeate, like, it was her, you know, and then her immediate family, you know, then the community, then the larger community in the prison and then the community outside.

Lora's capacity to keep moving forward and overcoming obstacles brought hope to many women and to staff alike.

### **People.**

*"I remember an Elder telling me, "You will learn the most from people who lived a different life journey than you"" (the colleague).*

Throughout the stories and quotations interviewees have been referred to by the role they played in Lora's life. This is not meant in any way disrespectfully; it is because there was little doubt that Lora knew who and she knew why she wanted to become and stay connected with certain people. Never at any time did I, or others feel used by this; it was just her way of knowing that she had a job to do, she knew she had deficits and difficulties, and she knew who she needed to help her defy them. We always knew it was more than just about Lora; her agenda always included the needs of others also. The facilitator explains,

There was no sort of stand-offishness about other people with Lora. I mean I felt that she was very connected but she chose those connections quite clearly and there was always-, I felt there was always a reason to the connection that she was making and quite frequently she was helping somebody that she was connected to.

As the chaplain notes,

Provisionally she met the right people who provided therapeutic relationships so she could move forward in a flourishing way. It was the power of love, the power of life, in which Lora was able to find connections that she had been searching for.

The lawyer reinforces this by saying that “what happened for Lora was that she got a handful of people who stood by her and said, ‘I am still here and I am not going anywhere.’ She tested it till the end of her life but she knew they really are not going anywhere.... So fortunate.” The colleague reflects on

respecting her for being able to do that, ... to bring so many people unlike her, you know, into the collective, right? ... she was a woman and she connected to me as a woman, you know, regardless of our life journeys.

A last visit to the palliative care unit demonstrates this well. As N the warden and I arrived on the unit we were greeted by a new doctor who had recently taken over the final stages of care for Lora. As she walked towards us she asked, “which one of you is N the warden and which one of you is Alison the mother?” We did not miss a beat or even question the question. We all had a role. N and I discuss this piece:

[N]: You know I think she needed the “I can count on you to call bullshit on me” you know in a way that’s very straightforward and black and white and “I won’t get confused by it” you know?

[Alison] “You were like an external brain regulator in a way.

[N]: Yeah and you were the mom she didn’t have.

The friend also commented, “I think, for her, it was the unconditional support and love, you know, that she learnt from you, you know, that probably many people in her life could not provide her, you know, for a variety of reasons.” Here lays the hope that attachment can be nurtured and achieved at any stage of life. The final word will go to Lora who left this message on my voice mail:

It's me Koala. You know what, how do you ever put up with me, I don't know, you know? It's, sometimes I say some rude things, you know. I know that I'm not directing it at you but I'm just like, sometimes I can say something really racial, sarcastic stuff and, you know, just like I wish she shouldn't be like that. I wish I wasn't like that, you know, I wish I shouldn't think like that. I know you're trying to help me and I wish somebody would just kick me in the arse and, you know, smarten up, quit being like that (laughs). Anyways, we're going out for a while and we should be home around supper time. I love you. Thank you for your support and your extra ear, I really needed it cause sometimes I feel like crying, sometimes I feel like giving up. But having you guys there just gives me that support.

In retrospect I realize what a gift it could have been to have supported and encouraged her to cry.

### **The Shadow.**

Throughout this section the stories of Lora have brought to light her strengths and capacities from childhood through to her final years. Without exception there is a shadow side when those strengths are either used for anti-social purposes or shut down deliberately and ignored. Lora was perceived as a bully and kept herself distant from most other women.

The colleague mentions her ability to "be able to speak about, you know, terrible, terrible things in a teaching way" and the facilitator spoke of her never identifying any fear in the trauma stories of her childhood. These comments hold the truth of a terrible silence and suppression of emotion that is well known among residential school survivors and their families (Ross, 2009). As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was beginning a man told Ross (2009), "What I hope to get from you," he said, "is the answer to just one question: Why can't I cry? Even when I know things are sad, why can't I cry?" Lora did not cry.



She fell to a paranoid place when she was afraid and at times saw racism even when it was not there. Any perceived threat to her son would bring out her aggression and defensive nature especially if she thought he could be taken from her again. The shadow side of her protective nature is demonstrated by her sister's fear of Lora as a child. Lora had hurt her badly more than once. "I couldn't even be near her that's how scared I was because the way she was and you can never say anything to her."

A relative remembers reconnecting with Lora in her later years about 2008 during the time her son was in ministry care. Her recollection was of Lora seeming "afraid, like, she was afraid on Brown Street.... afraid and kind of, antisocial." She goes on to say that Lora was quiet; she was silent and wouldn't really talk. Lora told her "she didn't trust anybody."

Three times I took her son from her to live with someone else as she desperately tried to assure his safety for a future without her: essentially anywhere but never in government care. Each time it ended badly as Lora found fault and became angry and defensive of any complaint or criticism of her son's behaviours which were understandably difficult at times. He would act out in frustration and anxiety due to his extraordinary life experiences and traumas and also because of the indulgence of Lora in her need to keep him happy under the circumstances.

Her other side, her old behaviours and her hopelessness became evident again when she was transferred back east demonstrating clearly that while she wanted to change, she had changed and she could use new strategies and coping mechanisms until she was again isolated and robbed of her dignity.

**Summary**

This chapter has attempted to identify the most salient and significant aspects of Lora, her journey, and her interactions with the systems she navigated. Lora moved from a place of little hope when she first arrived in BC. She believed that she would be dead by 35 and would never stay out of prison for more than 6 months. She had determined that she would not bring a child into the chaos and violence that she had been born into. She moved to believing that she could be a mother and that she could add value to the community, and as she neared her death her focus shifted from her own goals for continued growth to those of her son. These are actions founded on all the aspects of the theories of hope, described by Snyder (1994, 1999, 2002) and Scioli et al. (2011). Hope for a transformed future, healed from the destructive consequences of trauma and creating a valued social role for herself.

It has recognized the shadow side of all aspects and how easily both individuals and systems can slip from light to dark and how quickly behavior can resort to the most familiar actions. The systems encountered in this exploration including the community at large are little more than social constructions of individuals: the people. As stated earlier the only way to understand a person's journey toward healing from trauma, addiction, and *desistance* from crime is through his or her daily trials and that of the systems they are embedded within or nudge up against. Most significant in this life history is that of the correctional system. Healing and hope lies in building a new reality that becomes familiar in the light of every day. A facilitator looking back at her early years in BCCW around 2001 alludes to this deliberation in Lora:

I don't know that at the time we were working with her that she had formulated any sort of a future oriented perspective. I think she was actually in the throes of understanding that she could be someone different and not have to resort to the old ways of being in the world and that perhaps because that was the transition. I mean we noticed it of course mostly through her dress, the bandana left, right?

When Lora came to BCCW she wore a bandana, often considered a symbol of gang affiliation, tied tightly just below her eyebrows. Along with little facial expression this gave her a hard and unreadable affect. She has described her desire for connection to gang life seeking the support and connection and valued role of members that she found did not exist in reality. Her acquaintance recalls that when they got out they "were struggling for the happy; to be comfortable somewhere." Common to all of the significant factors for people in and beyond the prison system and correctional staff and volunteers is the importance of a defined and valued role with a sense of purpose, looking to the future with hope.

Below is a model of the many aspects that have been brought together to look at this complex issue:

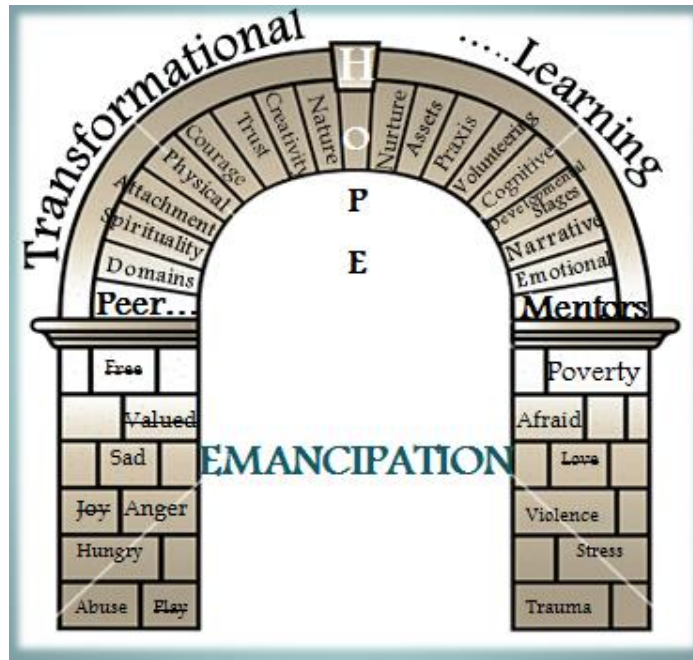


Figure 4. Model of Lora's journey to emancipation.

### Final Words

When reflecting on this project, not just the 4 years of study building towards this final dissertation but the entire journey with Lora, now 16 years on, I realize one significant similarity we share: Neither of us has much tolerance for insincerity. That of course is a double-edge sword. I learned how to manage my difficulty and have become aware of how hard I find it to make eye contact, for example, when I know that I am not operating from an open place. I also have more skills and capacity to avoid those circumstances and individuals that I am unable to honestly connect with.

Throughout the interviews I kept hearing that Lora was straight up, honest, always honest. Only now do I realize that this is referring to the characteristic that made her both compelling to work with and also excruciating for those whom she revealed this lack of sincerity within. Lora was always Lora, *warts n'all*. Her lawyer saw this

aspect of her clearly and found herself drawn to represent Lora whereas her legal assistant was not drawn to her and found Lora very frustrating. She explained,

It's about expression... it's about how she expressed herself and I can relate to that as a person who believes in expression as being a way to be to be present ... to empower yourself...with the issues that you are dealing with ... just to say it –that way of expression ...is not so much change its like blossoming it's like being yourself, ... including unfortunately ways that are to your demise or violent ways sometime I think it is that expression in that literal sense – getting it out that allows you to have an identity and Lora certainly had an identity I didn't ever see her put her identity aside... you know... to be someone else to try to curb it...I really admire that.

She transformed and she very much stayed the same. She found positive ways to achieve her goals but her desire to help and protect was nothing new.

Her ability to see and point out the inconsistency and contradiction, the discrepancy and dishonesty in a situation or a person was astute, to say the least; however, she was not always judicious in sharing it. The colleague remembered being grateful for the fact that Lora would call attention to an issue that others did not know how to address and of course it did not always make her friends.

The importance of this cannot be overstated. When working with, walking with, researching with people taking a new route away from crime and dishonest ways of being, a lack of sincerity, both theirs and ours, leads to eventual relapse to old behaviours. It is a professional responsibility in this work to seek honest engagement and to identify any return to an individual's crime cycle. I would actually say it is unprofessional, unethical, and plain unkind, but very, very hard to accomplish.

Lora abandoned the bandana she laughed, and shared her humour. Towards the end of her life she didn't want to be known as Koala anymore, because her street persona was no more. These had served her well to create a mask to maintain distance. I too

have found distance from the intense detail and involvement with Lora's journey to a vantage point perspective, watching the minutiae become a distinguishable whole, and how that creates a generalizable, transferable vision for research in the future.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### What Does Hope and Transformation Rest Upon?

#### Full Circle: From What Was Asked to What is Known and What Must be Asked

##### What Was Asked

Why and how did Lora want to change the habitually criminal and violent lifestyle she had led for the first 30 years of her life? What happens to facilitate *desistance*, and what are the subjective changes that matter in going straight? Exploring Lora's story was an attempt to learn from the quantitative and qualitative research from many fields. To explore the constructs written about and seek to understand how they manifest in the reality of an individual life that can only be understood from such a deep and intimate uncovering of who and how Lora was and became. "In 2005, Kana'iaupuni stated that knowledge, in order to be meaningful, must be rooted in the very realities that it is attempting to explain" (McGuire, 2010, p. 126) connecting and endeavouring to fill the gaps and enrich theory.

##### What is Known

As stated by Maruna (2001) earlier, people who exist in the cycles of addiction and criminal lives lack a coherent narrative for their life history. Those who were *desisters* in the Liverpool Desistance Study were found to have created a redemptive script, moving from a condemnation script that influences the ability to see beyond a life of crime. This seemingly simple explanation is so much more and could be recognized as a cultural shift, in the way that Lora had believed she had never belonged anywhere and would be dead by 35. In her redemption she found a place to belong, to have

purpose, and learned how to be attached individually and socially. In this way all people whose lives are controlled by the justice system could be said to be caught between 2 cultures and between 2 strata of society, living a confusing story of exclusion and often hopelessness.

### **Lost Between Two Cultures.**

A chilling example of the history of this issue lies in this quote from a 1949 thesis from the University of British Columbia (Twiggy Wynn Woodward, 1949):

The Indians are a race of people who have been caught between two ways of life. They have abandoned their own native customs; yet they do not follow the White standards because they are not able to comprehend them. There is no denying that Indians possess a culture-that differs from western civilization, but the popular belief that they are a basically inferior race is untrue. (p. 6)

The discussion of 2 worlds has many facets from the ethereal to the concrete.

Although I do not know the date of this action, an example of the complexity of learning where you belong is discussed by Hedican (1990) about the school in Collins where Lora was born and lived until she was 6:

Indian Affairs paid for the status children, and a provincial agency for the non-status ones. Teachers were hired by Indian Affairs without community consultation. In one year when the school was overcrowded, Indian Affairs indicated that, as the school was a federal installation, only status Indian students could attend; the others could be sent to Thunder Bay, 150 miles to the south. (p. 27)

In this case Lora would have been included but how does a small child reconcile a world where suddenly their friend and or family member may no longer belong and be shipped away to live in foster care during the school term, or worse what would it feel like to be the child banished? Status was lost by marriage which impacted the children and their future rights also. Even within a tiny rail-line community amongst people of



Aboriginal descent there are two worlds of differing rights splitting families and dividing relationships.

According to Wilson (2008), everything must be seen and become known within the context of the relationships it represents. This melding of Indigenous and Western approaches to understanding Lora's change describes an emergent system bridging the gaps and easing the tensions between two worldviews. There is so much wisdom in Indigenous epistemology that western criminology and correctional policy and practice can benefit from including.

As the chaplain states,

I could imagine and sense in Lora a tendency to see things differently from the way I did, holistically, relationally, with an undercurrent of sensory curiosity. It must have been a struggle for her to truly communicate her inner world of thoughts and relationships, or to know in which world she was really at home; perhaps home in neither, but a partial stranger in both.

In her remarks quoted earlier and spoken at UBC in 2008 Lora talks about splitting realities and how to do time:

Inside you never think about the outside - that is one thing you never think about because there are a lot of times that people become depressed and suicidal and things like that, but if you want to survive in the inside you have to forget about the outside.

This idea reinforced by the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (2005,

<http://rschools.nan.on.ca/article/lost-between-two-cultures-121.asp>) describes many of their Cree and Ojibway people who were educated in residential schools and afterwards were unable to survive in their traditional way of life in the bush. Nor could they survive in non-Aboriginal, mainstream society as their government-directed education was insufficient, thus creating a group of people who became the parents

caught between two worlds (Waldram, 2008). Lacking an identity that made sense they would pass on the shame about who they were to their children, trapping them in a cycle of pain, addiction, and poverty

As van der Kolk (2002) explains, outside the current rubric of PTSD symptoms there is also the loss or impairment of experiencing joy. This along with an impaired capacity for self-regulation can so easily lead to the instant gratification of sex, drugs, and adrenaline-infused crime. Lora mentioned in her speech transcribed in Chapter 1 that she had re-discovered what she liked to do and the value of creative activities, helping others, and being in nature. She found herself again, outside in the common space connecting two worlds teaching her son about his connection to nature, *kinomaage*.

### **What was Learned**

Overall, the thread running through this story highlights the importance of building both human and social capital and is evident in all four of the main areas of significance listed below. Human capital refers to building coping mechanisms and cognitive strategies (employment and educational skills) to improve functioning. It is built through pro-social learning and constructing social bonds or social capital referring to networks and relationships both leading to community engagement (Burnett & Maruna, 2004).

The four factors that most significantly supported Lora's healing are as follows:

1. Most significantly her journey began with a nurturance of hope that she did not initially hold for herself; gradually she began to believe in her own possibility and then was able to instill this in others. Her success in leaving behind the justice system as a

prisoner and becoming a valued volunteer was also a conveyance of hope to staff working in the system. Correctional staff benefit from seeing and knowing that their effort to support rehabilitation has merit: that people can and do grow and change. There is reciprocity in hope and the correctional systems would be helping their staff to acknowledge this and to support rehabilitation to a greater degree than is evident in policy and funding decision today.

2. She drew into her life a number of people that were able to support her hope and mentor her as she navigated a new start in a foreign world and to exit the role of violent criminal.

3. She developed a sense of purpose through her volunteer work and motherhood, a key in developing a changed identity and finding freedom.

4. Becoming a mother and learning the role of caregiver developed the attachment skills that grew with him and in other relationships that were important to her. Friendships cultivated her trust in others building a new sense of connection.

Lora was incarcerated at a time in British Columbia when holistic and creative interventions supported a milieu that saw possibility and explored multiple and individual approaches to empower people to grow beyond criminality. Intervention must be informed of domain-specific complex childhood trauma, contextualized developmentally, and embedded in the internal and external assets available throughout the life history, while also recruiting those that can be resourced for the future.

According to Maruna (2001), the main difference between those who change and those who don't is influenced by an internal belief in their ability to control events in

their lives. People who persist in their criminal lives tend to see themselves as constant victims of circumstance, a hopeless situation quite possibly related to shame. Those who desist find a way to envision themselves with agency and capability having a measure of control over their destiny, facing their guilt, taking responsibility and becoming resilient and creating a hopeful life vision. Adelson and Lepinsky (in Waldram, 2008) believe that

healing is an active, not passive, process: it is something you do, not something you think or that is done to you. In this sense, healing is work, it is ongoing and requires dedication. First and foremost, it requires commitment from the individual. No one can heal you or make you heal. Personal agency is stressed above all else. (p. 6)

As stated before, Carl Rogers (1961) believes that we cannot teach another person, only facilitate his or her learning. Individuals must actively seek new understandings of themselves and be agents of their own change (Stevens, 2012). Freire (2007) found that teaching was actually part of the oppressive order, that only dialogue could produce true learning, leading to emancipation. Emancipation will not be achieved through indoctrination or prescriptive learning; it must be absorbed through consideration and curiosity in autonomy (Mezirow, 1991). There is a thread of relationship woven through all of these pieces, which speaks to the terrible damage resulting from the severance of the fundamental connections between all people living side by side but so far apart.

### **Limitations**

I did not interview any of the staff who worked with Lora at either of the two institutions where she was volatile, violent, and feared. To be completely correct, I did not attempt to interview them, as I knew that any permission would be unlikely and at

best would take months if not years. This is a significant downfall of the system: It is closed. There is so much erroneous information about prisons, judgment of what happens behind the fence and defensiveness by the organizations that run them. It is all understandable but none is helpful.

It is impossible to return to the subject of this inquiry and check the assumptions and findings or to know if I asked the right questions. There could well be other variables that were not discussed or divulged by Lora; this, though, can be the basis of future research, to build on what has been learned from her life and explore whether it transcends people of different ethnic origins, religious belief systems, and political boundaries across continents. There is always more to know.

Overall, this study has only touched the surface of what can be learned about the people who are incarcerated. It has, however, attempted to share a systems view of many of the possible pieces, personal, public, and political, that collide to create a crime and a criminal.

### **Considerations for change**

#### ***Building a culture of reciprocal hope.***

Creating a culture of reciprocal hope is likely one of the most important concepts that needs to be explored and developed in that it has the potential to bring an improvement in the lives and health not only of the prisoners but also of the correctional staff who themselves suffer at the hands of a system built on fear, pain and punishment. Hope is the possibility that an inmate will reintegrate and not re-offend. "Hope defies easy restoration. When hope is lost, the most likely first source

of restoration of it is a relationship with a caring individual who has not lost hope” (Hillbrand & Young, 2008, p. 93).

There is a fallacy widely believed that correctional officers and prisoners cannot and do not communicate well. They can and do value each other. Aitken (2014) describes this rapport in significant numbers of prisoners who build good relationships with individual officers, based on humour and humanity. Over the 15 years I have been working *inside* I have found it to be quite predictable as to how the day will go depending on who is in charge and who is on duty. Some officers have a finely tuned ability to de-escalate, defuse, and re-stabilize a person and the environment; many are caring and concerned for those in their charge. These officers build and nurture possibility and hope in prisoners, but can endure negative consequences from other officers who ridicule the potential for reform or rehabilitation. Sadly these less hopeful officers are often the loudest and most empowered and at the moment they are supported by much of the political rhetoric and media reports we hear daily.

***Trauma-informed practice and programming.***

Perry (2009) recommends a more subtle clinical approach suggesting sensitivity to the foundational or lower innervating neural networks in order to influence the higher functions needing intervention and development. This can be achieved by patterned and repetitive activation of the neural system that mediates the function/dysfunction targeted, “for example physical exercise helps stroke victims recover speech” (p. 244).

Perry (2009) is relating this to work with traumatized children and gives the example:

This principle suggests that therapeutic massage, yoga, balancing exercises, and music and movement, as well as similar somatosensory interventions that provide patterned, repetitive neural input to the brainstem and diencephalon monoamine

neural networks, would be organizing and regulating input that would likely diminish anxiety, impulsivity, and other trauma-related symptoms that have their origins in dysregulation of these systems. (p. 243)

Although his work has been with children, he states that the heart of all effective therapy is based on the principle of use dependence that spans the whole life course. “Therapy seeks to change the brain” (Perry, 2009, p. 244). Finally he speaks to the importance of relational stability in the clinical setting required for even the very “best-practice” therapeutic work to be effective. Relationships that remain stable may not only be clinical or professional, peers are also important as recognized in the findings of the Ashley Smith inquest.

Ashley Smith was a 19-year-old woman who died in a segregation cell in federal custody. Her death from self-asphyxiation was a tragedy on so many levels and for so many reasons that led to it. The inquest findings have identified a number of recommendations; point 4 of the findings speaks to the importance of incorporating a wide range of effective therapeutic interventions:

- a) individualized to the needs of female inmates considering her self-identified needs, regardless of their security classification, status~ or placement;
- b) enhanced to include de-escalation training, and art, music, or pet therapy;
- c) trauma-, age-, and gender-informed, and developmentally appropriate; and,
- d) determined and authorized by mental health staff. (Carlisle, 2013, pp. 3-4)

Each one of these is important along with a main recommendation to abolish segregation as part of a culture that currently understands control as the only security measure available with people who are self-harming and suicidal.

*Attachment-based parenting program.*

Although Lora did not have her child until after she was free of the correctional system her violent history and prison experience played a significant role in her relationship with the Ministry of Child and Family social worker. It was an adversarial relationship from the start with responsibility lying with both Lora and the two social workers. Her son was a driving force in her life to heal the cycle of intergenerational trauma for him and herself while building for the future 7 generations. Why 7 generations? This Aboriginal teaching is that the 7<sup>th</sup> generation is beyond our direct contact, and should be considered when thinking of sustainability of more than 120 years into the future (<http://www.iisd.org/7thgen/>).

Attachment can be built later in life and for women in particular intimate connections are linked with identity and a sense of self (Herrschaft et al., 2009). Even from a prison cell it is possible to be a good parent, maintaining regular contact that is healthy and supportive of the many children who suffer in silence and often in shame. The program curriculum should also cover the re-entry process and reuniting with children to nurture hope for a relationship that is healing for both.

As a woman of child-bearing age prison custody would have been an ideal time to teach positive parenting programs to assist women such as Lora to understand attachment, bonding, and to recognize and avoid abuse of any kind. This can help to heal their own history and also build for the future of their families. Afifi, MacMillan, Boyle, Taillieu, Cheung, & Sareen (2014), state that “success in preventing child abuse could lead to reductions in the prevalence of mental disorders [including substance abuse], suicidal ideation and suicide attempts” (p. E331).



*Mentors for release support.*

Building on the relational factors so important to resilient people who are able to recover from addiction and desist from crime, the development of a strong mentoring program is vital. Lora's lawyer commented on relationship:

If we are going to stick together everything will look different... it will be fun-funny- we'll be together and there is nothing more beautiful than that and I think we forget that sometimes..... the value in having that relationship.

This support relationship should start as early as possible within the sentence, even if necessarily by telephone or Internet, and build beyond incarceration. Firstly it is important to understand what is meant in this particular context. Aitken of the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) in the United Kingdom (UK) has recently published a report on Meaningful Mentoring as an important part of the new initiative in the UK of the Transforming Rehabilitation strategy. Aitken (2014) offers this definition:

Mentoring is a voluntary relationship of engagement, encouragement and trust. Its immediate priority is to offer support, guidance and practical assistance to offenders in the vulnerable period around their release. Its longer term purpose is to help them find a stable lifestyle in which accommodation, employment, ties with family and friends, and a growing two-way relationship with the mentor all play their part in preventing a return to re-offending. (p. 12)

According to the report tabled by Baroness Corston (2007) for the UK prison system, women interviewed across the country said they wanted "mentors, counselling and listeners" (p. 30). Herrschaft et al. (2009) found that 17.4% of female respondents mentioned relationship-related factors (RRF) either peers or friends, as the most salient part of their change process. The CSC report mentioned at the beginning of this paper stated that 86% of Aboriginal women surveyed said they would need emotional support on release (CSC, 2004).

Aitken (2014) believes that mentors must be carefully chosen being warm characterful individuals, able to create relationships with continuity and trust. They need to be good at listening and advising while also connecting the offender with practical and psychological resources. Non-judgementalism is important while also maintaining solid boundaries.

According to Zurhold, Moskalewicz, Sanclemente, Schmied, Shewan, and Vertheim (2011), it is well known that the immediate period post release is particularly stressful due to the many tasks that have to be achieved. They found that most of the women interviewed for their study in 5 European cities who were successfully reintegrated had received special assistance in preparation for release. "Sufficient individual support in planning the steps of transition was found to be essential for improving the women's confidence in community life" (p. 59) and more than 60% were still trying to manage mental health problems.

Some ex-prisoners said that talking with someone about their feelings could be helpful only so long as they could trust that their confidentiality would be maintained. "No matter what programs or services are out there when you get out of prison, the main thing is to have someone to talk to and rely on as you sort out all the changes" (Kenemore & Roldan, 2006, p. 18), Lora talked about having someone safe to talk to, someone she could trust, as it is "a sign of weakness to, you know, to get close with people and talk about personal and this that and the other." Those she did trust were people who she knew from her time in prison or had considerable experience volunteering inside with. The UK report found that prisoners were most receptive to

mentors who began the relationship while they were still in custody as there is the opportunity for bonding to begin during the time of increased stress pre-release.

This issue is spoken of by men interviewed after release in recalling their experience with a custodial intervention called Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP). They are very upset that CSC is imposing more and more restrictions about the relationships between the volunteers who deliver the program and the inmates. CSC expects the alliances to be severed at release which one man described as “cutting off my legs” (Petrich, 2014, p. 35). Volunteers become disillusioned by such pressures and the sense of suspicion and end up resigning their volunteer status.

Of particular interest in relation to the discussion on attachment is that prisoners without a strong bond or attachment figure from any time in their earlier lives will often resist being mentored. They “find it difficult to comprehend that anyone may want to help them and ... often try to sabotage the mentoring relationship in order to prove their negative view of themselves” (Aitken, 2014, p. 31). Lora certainly engaged in this behaviour by testing the commitment of those supporting her.

One place I disagree with Aitkin is the need for *professional* mentors for women. Although I agree that their needs are complex, the very foundation of mentoring is built on the relational trust. From my experience with a peer mentoring team trust is more likely to develop with a peer or volunteer mentor as they are not bound in any way to the system except in safety and security matters. There is also more joy in knowing a person who is supporting you is doing so freely for the value of caring. There are people available to volunteer for this work as reported recently in Edmonton: “inmates are already in our backyard, and even more so upon release. If we don't start

helping inmates with transformational change long before they leave prison, how do you think they will come out?" (Cavanagh, 2014, p. 1)

*Peer mentoring.*

Building on the recent recommendations from the inquest into the death in custody of Ashley Smith, point number 5 recommends that a well-trained and supported peer mentor team should be developed. This will benefit both the team members and the women receiving services. Peer workers should have ongoing and extensive training. Point 5 is as follows:

5. That Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) create a permanent peer support program, with highly trained and qualified peer support workers in each of the women's penitentiaries that

- (a) is available to all women, including segregated women and regardless of security status; upon their request, 24 hours a day;
  - (b) provides training and on-going support for the peers by women-centred psychologists and social workers;
  - (c) ensures confidentiality between the female inmate and the peer to the greatest extent possible;
  - (d) can be utilized during an incident of self-injurious behaviour, if requested; and
  - (e) is offered to women actively engaged in self-injurious behaviour or at risk of engaging in self-injurious behaviour as a therapeutic intervention .
- (Carlisle, 2013, p. 4)

The role of peer mentor provides a valuable opportunity for self-reflection, building a sense of purpose and the invaluable ability to make a positive contribution (Herrschaft et al., 2009). This role supports the development of a new pro-social identity so necessary for *desistance*, according to Maruna (2001). Being a mentor can assist in turning their troubled past into something positive. Exploring the details and nuances of mentoring with this population will be important research for the future.

*Community service and volunteer program protocol for inmates.*

Beyond peer mentoring, Kenemore and Roldan (2006) found that both men and women released in the community had a desire to help others, particularly youth. Their concern was to encourage them not to follow in their own footsteps; also important was to contribute to their families and communities. LeBel (2007) found that there is a positive relationship between the helper role and increased self-esteem and higher satisfaction with life.

Community service work can be facilitated from segregation, maximum security, and general population settings. Each facility would need to make links to local organizations that may need small projects to be accomplished or to accept donations from the prisoners. The services can entail a wide variety of activities offering creative opportunities as well as intellectual stimulation and boredom alleviation. According to the Corston report (2007), initiatives such as these and others are vulnerable to funding cuts and often are only available when particular staff are on shift and frequently disappear when those staff are transferred or move on. This is certainly true in Canadian prisons also.

This is not a new idea. Since the 1950s various fields of study have been exploring and writing about this involvement described by Maruna (2001) as the wounded healer or "professional ex-." Much work has been done to implement this in the area of mental health and of course in the sponsor role in Alcoholics Anonymous, but little serious attention has been paid until now in the area of prisoner rehabilitation and re-entry.

Feelings of remorse were strong predictors of a helping orientation in LeBel's (2007) study. He suggests this is connected to the internalization of regret and as mentioned earlier this is more in keeping with the ability to feel the guilt without the shame. The study also supported the principle of retroflexive reformation, first described by Cressey in 1955, (as discussed in LeBel, 2007), whereby people engaged in reforming others actually benefit the most themselves. They would also most likely have a more pro-social attitude as well which LeBel (2007) believes demonstrates an incompatibility between helper orientation and criminal attitudes.

Although the empirical evidence is scant there is some to show that offenders who go straight are significantly more care oriented (Maruna, 2001). Overall, general population surveys find that helping others is strongly related to psychological well-being (LeBel, 2007). One finding of interest was the suppression of helping while on a supervision order in the community. I have approached the National Parole Board of Canada to discuss the possibility of requesting information about and valuing the volunteer and community service work that a person might apply for when presenting for release either on parole or for temporary absences (TA), building attachment through the work and to the community at large.

***Pre-release program based on strengths and possibilities***

Burnett and Maruna (2004) found a strong correlation between self-reported estimates of the likelihood of re-offending or not and the actual outcome of future criminal activity. Individuals have the ability to fairly accurately predict their future behaviour. Questions tapping into a person's perceived sense of control over his or her destiny and ability to achieve personal goals, found they were strongly correlated with

*desistance*. Prisoner optimism on release may have an impact on their success so long as exogenous barriers do not overwhelm self-efficacy and self-determination. Perhaps it is possible to increase these personal estimates by engaging prisoners with learning about their strengths and possibilities.

A tool could be developed to explore in depth, an understanding of how people hope, what they hope for, and what they know to be their assets while considering how those assets can be recruited to overcome areas of deficit. Scioli et al. (2011) introduced a theory of hope drawn from multiple disciplines, including psychology, philosophy, theology, and medicine; this along with Snyder's goal-oriented theory would inform the development of such a tool. Broadening the integrative approach describes four components: attachment, mastery, and survival/coping motives, as well as spiritual, set within agency and pathways. Here is the intersection with other areas of recommendation particularly attachment, healing the wounds of trauma through building connections.

As part of the journey towards release this would fit well with the results from the study by Zurhold et al. (2011) who found that the immediate period post release is particularly stressful due to the many tasks the have to be achieved. Most of the women interviewed for their study in 5 European cities who were successfully reintegrated had received special assistance in preparation for release: "Sufficient individual support in planning the steps of transition was found to be essential for improving the women's confidence in community life" (p. 59).

***Interdisciplinary training program.***

The lawyer who is also a law professor believes that

the correctional system in Canada right up till law school doesn't prepare students for Indigenous way of being in the world... A place to start could be Indigenous Law which by the way centres right at the beginning on relationship... from relationship flows responsibility, obligation, and respect, and treating people with dignity and so on... So it starts with relationship whereas our Canadian system doesn't. It starts with an adversarial ... if some of those values could be taught if there was an openness to really understand. A better ear.... An open ear.

An openness to understand is the place to begin.

There is considerable intricacy when considering the trauma history causing developmental interruptions, set within asset deficit and psychological, social, and learning barriers to name a few of the aspects of the life histories of people incarcerated and imprisoned by addiction. Such complexity leads to contemplating the need for specifically trained personnel for the custodial setting. The silos that are mammoth and protected within the correctional systems could be breached and bridged by a common language and knowledge base. Currently there is no particular educational pathway to guide a person aspiring to work in the setting. An interdisciplinary program founded on the principles of human development: encompassing social work, criminology, psychology, recreation, and occupational therapy with a focus of applied health sciences could achieve a significant step forward.

### **What Will be Asked**

In exploring the literature from criminology to psychology and beyond there are multiple articles that use the word hope and share ideas about a future focus. Most are discussing the issues and circumstances, traits, and behaviours that either drive or result from the ability to be optimistic and see possibility. However I have not found



any as yet that actually explore the phenomenon of hope itself within power imbalanced environments such as prisons: If we cannot effect a change in the circumstances of a person in prison, either prisoner or staff, we must examine the potential for changing their ability to find hope within their current circumstance, in order to set goals and focus on a healthy future.

Another question of interest is to understand what a theory of hope looks like for people of collective cultures as compared with individualistic cultures. Du and King (2013) have made a foray into this but still I have found nothing specifically in the Indigenous scholarly literature. It is important for this study because of the number of people who remembered Lora as someone who never gave up and always seemed to find hope and to keep moving forward.

Arndt (2004) sought to understand these cultural differences at the macro level of independent and interdependent cultures by comparing U.S. and Mexican citizens. This journey proved more difficult than expected and although cognitive aspects of hope could be reasonably explored, other theories that are emotion based were more difficult to measure. What arose for me was to question what was meant by culture in his and other studies as relating to a broad perhaps overgeneralization of a people's connectedness. A culture is also a medium that promotes conditions suitable for growth so perhaps rather than asking about hope in various cultures, we could perhaps be exploring how and what cultural mediums nurture hope.

Another aspect of hope is to explore the agential and pathways capacities of those involved in criminal methods to achieve their goals. There is a place where a child

growing up in compromising circumstances learns to become helpless that has disastrous lifetime outcomes for education and employment (Perry & Szalavitz, 2008).

If those who choose anti-social ways could be seen to have strengths in having avoided helplessness then redirecting their waypower and celebrating their self-efficacy would be a start to re-attaching them to the community. Perhaps from this place they would find a desire to help rather than hurt as was demonstrated by Lora's life changes.

While there is increasing evidence that prisoners can make positive behavioural changes and that components of rehabilitation programs are successful there is little known of the factors that nurture intrinsic motivation to engage. The interplay between subjective and objective contingencies, cognitive and social variables within the role of agency and structure must all be identified and then teased apart to understand the fluctuations and perhaps to see if there is order in the change process (Burnett & Maruna, 2004).

Williams and Streat (2002) discuss the difficulty for correctional professionals to manage their own emotional response to the crimes prisoners have committed and how this can affect the communication process between the two and the subtle ways messages of hopelessness are sent. "If we are to help offenders to increase intrinsic motivation, and therefore experience lasting success from treatment, it is imperative to dispel the "us vs. them" mentality" (Williams & Streat, 2002, ¶. 4). How can prison personnel be encouraged in seeking strengths-based approaches and a solutions-focused paradigm? Increasing this will go a long way to building the potential for prisoners to see programming as viable, helpful, and moving towards an improved

future founded on hope and possibility, rather than part of the punishment of incarceration.

There is a paucity of knowledge regarding the experience of people re-entering the community after incarceration, however it is well known that this is a daunting struggle and often overwhelming (Kenemore & Roldan, 2006). It would also be worthwhile to explore whether hope for a better future was important in the successful reintegration of people who have maintained their freedom and not returned to custody for 5 or more years.

Mentors have proven to be important in this story and in many others. However, there is little known in the correctional field about the details of who is best suited, peer, professional or volunteer and how long should the mentoring relationship be? It would also be beneficial to know what will encourage a person moving towards release to sign up for a mentor and what would maintain the engagement.

### **Summary.**

The overlap of these recommendations and questions is found in the relationships that create the environment for the new identity to emerge, based on opportunities for learning through service work in real-time, and in real life, while supported, and valued. Opportunities facilitated by specifically trained and supportive personnel and volunteers, could nurture attachment to people, places, and society at large, building self-determination, efficacy, empathy, and reflective skills. The purpose: to lead to a life that is hopeful and has the identity of human being not "con," no longer defined only as ex-offender.

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**Appendix A: Informed consent****Informed Consent Form***The Journey to Healing and Desistence: Lora's Story***NAME OF SUBJECT:** \_\_\_\_\_

You have been invited to participate in a research study conducted by Alison Granger-Brown, a doctoral student in the School of Human and Organizational Development at Fielding Graduate University, Santa Barbara, CA. This study is supervised by Dr. Connie Corley for the pilot project and Dr. Miguel Guilarte for the dissertation project. This research involves the study of the life and healing journey of Lora Ann Kwandibens and is part of Alison's Fielding Dissertation. You are being invited to participate in this study because Alison is collecting the story details of Lora's early and later life to better understand how she came into her addiction and criminal life and particularly how she healed beyond.

Before you agree to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the information provided in this informed consent form. If you have any questions, please ask the researcher for clarification.

**Why Is This Study Being Done?**

Lora is an extraordinary example of a woman who grew beyond her life of addiction and crime. Exploring her life history could help us to understand the factors

that supported this change which could be of significant benefit to other women in the future. This was Lora's wish.

### **How Many People Will Take Part In The Study?**

There will be approximately 4-5 people interviewed to describe her early life and about 10-15 people who journeyed with Lora during and after her incarceration.

### **What Is Involved In The Study?**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be interviewed by Alison for about an hour, with a continuation or a follow up interview if necessary. This interview will be informal and either face to face or by telephone. It will be audio taped for the purposes of data collection and analysis. Some interviews may be video-taped, you may ask for the recording device to be turned off at any time.

### **How Long Will I Be In The Study?**

The study involves the time taken for the interview, to be arranged at your convenience, between August and November of 2013. This will last approximately 60 minutes.

### **What Are The Risks Of The Study?**

The risks to you are considered to be minimal, however, should the interview cause you any emotional upset, a follow up conversation will be arranged. If that is not sufficient and should you experience more discomfort, please contact the researcher and information will be provided for counseling in your local area or with a research assistant who is qualified to provide counseling.

**What Are The Benefits To Taking Part In This Study?**

There are no particular benefits being attributed to this project for the individual participants.

**What about Confidentiality and Protection?**

Study related records will be held in confidence. Your consent to participate in this study includes consent for the researcher, supervising faculty, and possibly a confidential Research Assistant who may also see your data. Your research records may also be inspected by authorized representatives of the Fielding Graduate University, including members of the Institutional Review Board or their designees. They may inspect, and photocopy as needed, your records for study monitoring or auditing purposes. In addition, parts of your record may be photocopied.

The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. The informed consent forms and other identifying information will be kept separate from the data. All materials will be kept in my office in a locked filing cabinet. The tape recordings will be listened to only by the Researcher a professional transcription service and possibly a confidential Research Assistant, who has signed the attached Professional Assistance Confidentiality Agreement.” Any records that would identify you as a participant in this study, such as informed consent forms, will be destroyed approximately three years after the study is completed.

You will be asked to provide a different name for any quotes that might be included in the final research report. If any direct quotes will be used, permission will be sought from you first.

The results of this research will be published in a pilot project report and also my dissertation and possibly published in subsequent journals, books or presentations, all confidentiality agreements will be applied in the future publications.

The security of data transmitted over the Internet cannot be guaranteed, therefore, there is a slight risk that the information you send to me via email will not be secure. The collection of such data is not expected to present any greater risk than you would encounter in everyday life when sending and/or receiving information over the Internet.

**Participation In Research Is Voluntary:**

You are free to decline to participate or to withdraw from this study at any time, either during or after your participation, without negative consequences. Should you withdraw, your data will be eliminated from the study and will be destroyed.

The researcher is also free to terminate the study at any time.

**Compensation:**

No compensation will be provided for participation.

**Study Results:**

You may request a copy of the summary of the aggregate final results by indicating your interest at the end of this form.

**Additional Information:**

If you have any questions about any aspect of this study or your involvement, please tell the Researcher before signing this form. You may also contact the supervising faculty if you have questions or concerns about your participation in this

study. The supervising faculty has provided contact information at the bottom of this form.

You may also ask questions at any time during your participation in this study.

If at any time you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, contact the Fielding Graduate University IRB by email at [irb@fielding.edu](mailto:irb@fielding.edu) or by telephone at 805-898-4033.

Two copies of this informed consent form have been provided. Please sign both, indicating you have read, understood, and agree to participate in this research. Return one to the researcher and keep the other for your files. The Institutional Review Board of Fielding Graduate University retains the right to access to all signed informed consent forms.

**I have read the above informed consent document and have had the opportunity to ask questions about this study. I have been told my rights as a research participant, and I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. By signing this form, I agree to participate in this research study. I shall receive a signed and dated copy of this consent.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME OF PARTICIPANT (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

Dr. C. Corley or Dr. M. Guilarte

Alison Granger-Brown,

Fielding Graduate University

P.O. Box 1019

2112 Santa Barbara Street

Fort Langley

Santa Barbara, CA 93105

BC, V1M 2S4

805-687-1099

604 888 6401

.....  
Yes, please send a summary of the study results to:

\_\_\_\_\_

NAME (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_

Street Address

\_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip



**Appendix B: Project Announcement**

This project will be conducted to partially fulfill the requirements for a  
Doctor of Philosophy from Fielding Graduate University  
by Alison Granger-Brown

Under the supervision of Dr. C. Corley and Dr. M. Guilarte

The Journey to Healing and Desistance: Lora's Story

I journeyed with Lora Ann Kwandibens for fourteen years, through incarceration and afterwards as she became a mother, trusted volunteer and finally a cancer patient. Her resiliency and determination have inspired this project which hopes to deepen our understanding of what is necessary to support and nurture the opportunity for change when a woman reaches the point at which she wants to take a new pathway for her life.

I would like to interview family members and friends who knew Lora through any part of her life. I will begin with the early years to understand the basis for her resilience and the factors that took her on the journey through addiction and eventually prison.

The story of Lora's life will not include any details as to who shared specific information.

The final document will be a dissertation paper. It was Lora's hope that I would one day write her story for publication and so this may serve as the first step towards that goal.

Contact for information on this study:

If you wish more information about this study please contact me, Alison Granger-Brown at 604 888 6401 or [aligb1956@gmail.com](mailto:aligb1956@gmail.com) or on Facebook under my full name.

**Appendix C: Professional Assistance Confidentiality Agreement**

The Journey to Healing and Desistance: Lora's Story

Dissertation Research Project for

Fielding Graduate University  
2112 Santa Barbara Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93105 USA



I have agreed to assist Alison Granger-Brown in her research study on the healing and desistance from crime of women offenders in the role of confidential Research Assistant or Transcriptionist. I understand that all participants in this study have been assured that their identity will be kept confidential. I agree to maintain that confidentiality. I further agree that no materials will remain in my possession beyond the operation of this research project and I further agree that I will make no independent use of any of the research materials from this project.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix D: Memorial****Lora Anne Kwandibens****Memorial gathering at Fraser Valley Institution**

One way Lora expressed her commitment to leave the world a better place than she found it was to "give back" to the women who'd been with her through some of the darker moments in her own life. As a co-founder and active member of the Human Rights In Action Collective and Sisters in Action and Solidarity, she never tired of the work and tasks she invented for herself in an effort to get women through their imprisonment and better our chances of staying free once outside the walls.

Lora's unshakeable dedication to these aims is a part of her legacy to us. Christine



We will miss her dearly at the same time she lives on in our hearts and in her son as she continues to inspire us to engage the world and live up to her achievement of courage and strength

**Appendix E: Remembering Lora**

By Chaplain Henne (Henk) Smidstra

Lora's inquisitive face, frequently a twinkle in her eye, stands out in my memory. She was a person of few words, but she could make her point clearly, often though a slight stutter or hesitation at the beginning her phrases, indicating some insecurity or caution perhaps, but inviting conversation. She liked to ask personal questions, sometimes difficult for me to answer given the prison protocol demanding professional distance. She had a sense of humour and with a twinkle in her eye and seemed to enjoy her experience of life in making new discoveries about herself and her world it seemed. She did not like groups too much and I saw her most one-on-one, but I am sure that she inquired of me how God could be a good guy when so much bad stuff was allowed to happen in this world. Perhaps she was just having fun with me at times to see how I would answer. I shared with her that she was a valued child of the Creator; Lora's story impressed on me the importance of her search for those sacred relations to the land and its culture and peoples. She remembered fondly her devout grandmother who faithfully attended a Christian church that was expressive warding off evil and searching for signs of God's existential presence in a life of prejudice and oppression. There had been much that had happened in the North Western Ontario community during the time of Lora's ancestors, with ripple effects negatively reaching deeply into her inner world. Personally I recognized her searching curious nature as an indication of a deeply wounded yet spiritual person, searching for a sense of purpose and meaning in life. I consider her my mentor. Her story motivated me to search for and discover the deep spiritual importance of traditional Aboriginal ancestral lands and

cultures of Canada, especially the Ojibwa lands of Lora's ancestors. Knowing her, I formed an existential "relationship" with the effects of colonisation, and of the industrialization of North Western Ontario. Her personality and her story affected me deeply early in my career as prison chaplain. She helped me see; perhaps I helped her find some sense of inner worth.

I did not always understand where Lora was coming from, but I recognized in her an aboriginal epistemology; for her truth and knowledge are relational. I had heard about this once in a talk by Rupert Ross, a Canadian Judge who worked many years with First Nation's people in the court system in Northern Ontario. The way he explained it was that when persons raised and educated in Western culture see a meadow, for instance, they see the various components as isolated items: flowers, grass, bees, trees, etc.; however, a person raised in traditional Aboriginal community will see primarily not isolated things, but rather the relation between things: the space between things, life, filled with its relationships between the flowers, grass, bees and trees, the land, its people, etc. I could imagine and sense in Lora a tendency to see things differently from the way I did, holistically, relationally, with an undercurrent of sensory curiosity. She also shared another perspective on reality which she had picked up from her experience in urbanized Euro-Canadian culture of Northern Ontario in the late 1970's and 1980's. At times I thought Lora's perspectives were quite western, I am sure she lived between two cultural worlds, being at home in neither one. It must have been a struggle for her to truly communicate her inner world of thoughts and relationships, or to know in which world she was really at home; perhaps home in

neither, but a partial stranger in both. Perhaps as Oscar Handlin said of Immigrants in N. America in his book *The Uprooted* (1951), she was living in suspended animation.

To say anything about Lora it must thus be done in the context of her story, within the wholeness of her lived reality. Her Ojibwa ancestors of the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had lived mostly traditionally lives, living close to the land and to nature, knowing its ways and its Sprit. They knew how to manage in the life of the forest and the seasons of nature to sustain their lives. Planting and harvesting wild rice as well as hunting and fishing. They were self-sufficient and were free to maintain their own ways, as well as acquiring supplies in the fur trader as they chose; they supplemented their resources by hunting for the fur trade. Many of Lora's ancestors probably lived in Fort Hope much further north of Collins where she was born. As well some may have come as from the Lake Nipigon area such of White Sand. Both the new Canadian Government at Confederation and the land hungry government of Ontario had battled over boundaries and land without really considering the culture and human rights and values of the original inhabitants of the land. Treaties and legal arrangements reflected western concepts of land ownership along with primary motives for profit not for the human flourishing of all. To Lora's ancestors, the idea that land could be owned, bought and sold was ludicrous. Land belonged to the creator and could only be shared. As well, for them the land brimmed with the relationships of life's dynamics. Treaty #3 dealt with the traditional Ojibwa lands of Lora's ancestors. The new Canadian government also passed the Gradual Socialization Act and began building residence schools in their misguided notions to "civilize the natives" and to develop what they saw as "empty wilderness." The commodification of sacred lands with the opening of the

western lands as the “next best west” opened up ancient Ojibwa lands to a flood of settlers and subsequent technology with resource-hungry corporations displacing human beings without much thought that these people had had lived here since time immemorial, that they had legitimate human rights, rights to the land, to their own value system, beliefs and world view, and language.

The rapid philosophical and social changes caused serious deterioration of the social and spiritual life of Lora's ancestors after Confederation with increasing social disintegration and family breakdown as the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed. In Traditional culture, land was a sacred gift and its resources meant for sharing. Sure there had been contests and skirmishes over issues; but the First Nations were not out to eliminate each other's culture or essence as a people. The Aboriginal world view was holistic and everything was in relational spiritual relation. They sought harmony with the creator, nature, and their community. Now a western culture aggressively forced its way upon Lora's grandparents and parents which held very little to be sacred, except the soul of the native that should be civilized. Paternalistically, as the “white man's burden, the people considered to be primitive savages, had to be Christianized and socialized, to become western in culture and life style. Families were now to become functional units for economic gain and progress. The search for harmony among the meadows, its climate, and its seasons of flowers, berries and winter time was now meaningless. Rapid social disorganization, alcoholism and violence as well as disease rapidly followed. Corporate profits soared during this Canadian guided age for railroad, mining, and forestry magnates and their corporations. Some people became stinking rich; Lora's people were left to fend for themselves in remote reservations or



in urban jungles. Disconnected from the sacred ties to their land, from creation, they became disconnected from their creator, their ancestors and themselves. It was into this anemic social-spiritual climate that Lora's grandparents, parents, and Lora herself were born.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century brought rapid sudden disorganizing industrial and technological change, radically affecting the lives of Lora's family. Slowly at first in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the devastating dominating effects of the residence schools as well as that of industrializing the land and exploiting natural resources. The assimilation process had begun to try to make them productive workers and consumer- citizens. Besides the effects of the residence schools, rapid technological change was another toxic influence that eroded the essence of the survivors to the core of their souls in the disorganized communities left behind in the wake of a resource hungry culture in which nothing was sacred but the bottom line of profit for the corporation.

The Canadian National Railroad came through the remote Ojibwa lands of North West Ontario in 1911. The residence school at Pelican Lake, or Sioux Lookout, opened in 1926. At first Lora's ancestors came down from their territories seeking trading opportunities at the rail line which came from Eastern Ontario running just above Lake Nipigon from Armstrong, heading west through to Collins, and on to the Sioux lookout and on to Winnipeg. Collins was one of a number of small rail towns, more like a cluster of huts and small dwellings erected by individuals attracted by possible work for the CNR or for merchandising and trading. Lora was born in Collins Ontario in the early 1970's. Collins had remained a small rail town of less than 200 people. Lora's grandparents or parents must have been attracted to this little cluster of

huts and railroad buildings for some kind of future, as many other immigrants had done as well during the 1940's and 1950's. Sociologist Rex Lucas (*Minetown Milltown Railtown*, 1971) depicts life in these rail towns that sprang up as small, urban, secular islands, created by technology in remote areas of Canada. Lucas' research arises out of the social conditions of the 1940's, 1950's, and 1960's, the time of Lora's grandparents and parents. He indicates though, that often it had been the younger individuals that had settled in these small rail towns; few Elders were to be seen. Employment too was ethically stratified, and Aboriginals, (he still called them Indians), were held at the lowest level of employment due to prejudicial stereotypes. Lucas also suggests that First Nations people stayed on the margins of these settlements because of their own attitudes to the life styles and styles of labour so radically different from their traditional ways. Aboriginal people must have felt apathy and disgust towards the foreign profit driven individualism of these small communities created by modern technology. The stereotype was that Indians didn't know how to work. They apparently did not jump into the rat race of resource exploitation and labour for individual profit enthusiastically. I am sure it was a rude shock to their spirits.

Edward J. Hedican (*On the Rail-line in Northwestern Ontario: non-Reserve Housing and Community Change*: [www2.brandonu.ca/library/CJN/10.2/hedican.pdf](http://www2.brandonu.ca/library/CJN/10.2/hedican.pdf)) of the department of sociology and Anthropology at the University of Guelph did extensive research at Collins Ontario a decade (1975-1986) after Lucas completed his study. This study would describe the challenges of life in Collins during the first years of Lora's life. Collins as a rail town attracted as, he called it, a demographic shift of

many Ojibwa people. They lived in substandard housing with poor water and sanitation and a poverty of supportive services at the time Lora was born. An initial study taken in 1975 notes a population of 148 people, of who over half were under the age of 21; 43 % of Collins residents in 1975 were under the age of 16, living in 30 largely un-serviced and poorly built houses. A household survey taken 10 years later in 1985 revealed that conditions had improved little, employment opportunities were declining, and that many had migrated elsewhere. The population of Collins had dropped from 123 to 89 people; Lora would have been one of the 15 children to migrate with her parents from this disorganized community to a larger disorganized urban world. First Nations people often did not go back to the reserve because of overcrowded conditions there; a high number were also non-status with no access to assistance. Hedican wanted to highlight the fact that these “migrants” had been attracted to possible opportunities for work and trade areas near the CNR properties, but they settled essentially as squatters on Crown Lands, and had no legal rights to their homes or land. Hedican emphasises also that the people, especially the Aboriginal people living in non-reserve, non-incorporated settlements, were caught in the middle between federal and provincial responsibilities, if there were any responsibilities perceived for human services at all. The substandard living conditions were largely unrecognized and serviced by the government; as well there were few employment opportunities in this one-industry town of Collins, and as poverty and social disorganization increased, many migrated to larger urban centres in Canada. Lora's parents moved to Thunder Bay. Lora lived in Collins for the first six years of her life, her formative pre-verbal, and developmentally formative years; and she her

family in Collins were doubly landless and vulnerable in Thunder Bay. Life at the margins of urban life in Thunder Bay was different, but life became more disconnected and objectified as part of the urban workforce and urban poverty. The concept and existential sense of home was insecure and conflicted, and must have registered in Lora's subconscious, in her soul and spirit.

I remember listening to Lora about life at "home" with her family and relatives in Thunder Bay. There had been alcoholism and physical violence and disorganization in her family, the legacy of colonization and of rapid industrialization of North Western Ontario. The world in which Lora had grown up during her developmental years was one deeply insecure, conflicted, affected by radical changes in all her relations, now she joined her generation of aboriginal female youth caught in the racially stratified urban culture of Thunder Bay. Perhaps we can also say, her parents and community, traumatized and detached through rapid social disorganization, prejudice and racism in the rapidly westernizing and commercializing era of the 1950's, were spiritually and emotionally unavailable to her, if not emotionally and physically abusive. Modern brain science has revealed so much about the lasting negative affective and cognitive effects of trauma, its stress and the feeling of powerless over the invisible forces of change that the Lora's community experienced. Lora learned to survive with an assaultive world view that implied that, "... this is a dangerous, changing, unpredictable, violent world, and if you don't come out fighting, they will get you first. "I don't really want to hurt anyone", she would say, "but what do you do when they come after you or threaten friends you act instinctively."

Is it any wonder that Lora was searching for something, not always knowing what. Searching no doubt for a “life map or script” to live as it were in a culture alien and strange to her. In a spiritual sense inherited implicitly, there was the disconnection her ancestors and culture had experienced as alienated from their own lands, their creator, their language and culture, and consequently from themselves. Lora, as I sensed was searching for a deep connection to home, and to being at “home” with herself? She seemed close sometimes. In her search she had vague memories in her soul, imprinted by her creator, positive imprints of shadows of her culture, and a deep sense of inner spirituality: a sense of holistic relational connection. Lora’s story is more than being about an Aboriginal woman overcoming the adverse effects of her developmental life. There is that dimension, yet it was the power of her love for life, her son, and all her relationships, that which was at the core of making her labour of life-transformation possible. As well, her growing spiritual capacity for self-love allowed others in to affirm and love her, though sometimes with some great self-sacrifice. Providentially she met the right people who provided therapeutic relationships so she could move forward in a flourishing way. It was the power of love, the power of life, in which Lora was able to find connections that she had been searching for.

The story about Lora is not just about how the story of her life began, or the facts of what happened, but how it continues on after she physically passed away. Her story continues on in the life of her son and partner and in the lives of so many others who she connected with; connections with the work of truth, reconciliation and healing for all relations. Her story is also about how she impacted me, influenced me and so many she connected with and was in relation with. I feel a deeper connection with the

communities she grew up in, and with her people the Ojibwa people; with creation itself. Driving through her ancestral lands on the TransCanada Highway through ancient Ojibwa lands from Kenora to Thunder Bay, I related to it in a personal way as being connected with it and with its history of Lora's people. This is not just empty wilderness, *terra nullius*, as the early colonial developers saw it, or as the group of seven artists as romantically empty windswept nature; but rather I see a world of living relationships ancient and past. I see Lora's bronzed and beaming face before me in my memory. Being part of Lora's story myself I continue on, not to blame the past but celebrate the present and create a flourishing hope for a better future for Canada's first nations people, especially those made vulnerable by life's circumstances in this postmodern world.

Henk (Henry) Smidstra worked as inter-faith prison chaplain for 21 years, retiring in May of 2012. He experienced immigration, emigrating from Holland with his family in 1949 as a 5 year old to Southern Ontario. Henk worked as an auto mechanic before entering his studies at Calvin College (BA History) and Calvin seminary in Grand Rapids Michigan. He interned for his M. div. in San Francisco working for a year in an inner city mission and half way house mainly for urban Aboriginals. He also spent eight years working in urban missions in Manila Philippines. Returning to Canada, he settled down in the Vancouver BC area working in a variety of ways in the criminal justice system with the concept of Restorative justice, the last 21 years for BC Corrections. His interests have continued studies to develop his understanding of restorative justice, looking at the traditional adversarial, retributive, system, and the theory and theology that grounds it, with a critical lens. Gravely concerned also about

the way the legal system has failed the Aboriginal communities in Canada as well as concern about the tragic, continued over-representation of Aboriginal men, women and youth in Canada's prisons. He is currently writing essays on justice, history, and moral theology. He lives in Surrey BC with his wife Grace and enjoys visits with, and from, their four children and three grandchildren, as well as his gardening and tinkering with old cars.

**Appendix F: Lora's Poetry**

From multiple scraps of paper and inside various diaries and note books I have collected her poems and transcribed them as close as possible to their original layout and exactly to her spelling. In text boxes I have made notes to explain some of her unique expressions.

Dream

How many lights doesn't shine  
upon us.  
    each day I want new dreams

I lay here staring at this

painting done by Kay about  
two bears one in the lead  
the other following  
    my body is withdrawing  
watching Amanda Knox                   (2009)  
where is my life going  
    I'm **dying, dying**  
not enough time to make good  
on my path for my son  
I want a good life for him  
opportunity

    How?

        How?

            How?

    I'm **dying** each day this  
Cancer takes it control  
Control over my body

        I'm **dying**

            why?

                why?

    I hear a cough think of  
this lady trying to make her life  
good for her



Osama Bin ladin (2011)  
Is Dead

Saddiness sweeps me  
Its half true  
True real  
White lies  
Red blood  
from human veins are the  
America flags  
What's real, what's fake  
Will they tell the truth  
Where's the boxes of truth

White lies  
Blue veins  
Red blood,  
Best day of america's  
their blood is tainted

Read this my son

Live life  
Live strong  
Don't look back  
Look forward  
Keep going forward  
I'm stepping outta my past  
To short not enough time  
I wish I had you along  
time ago  
you gotta make this journey without me boy

teers running down  
our life has been struggling  
to be together I love you  
I love you

Go forward  
Be somebody  
Be brave  
Save your money  
S work hard  
I love  
you with all my heart

A long time ago

What happened  
 Age 4 acting 20 he says haha  
 Smart  
 Realizing hey what's happening

## A long time ago

    We did this  
     That this and that  
 now we're home bond  
 am I lazy no I'm **dying**  
 As depression set I want out  
 I want to live today  
 "God damn it" along time ago  
 Hopes' dreams' what next  
 I want out, is it real  
 Or am I dreaming  
 Along time ago we used to do  
 a lot now I lay waiting  
 my faith, but seeing him, my son

Got away

    Got away  
 Did I really  
     I saw once  
 Twice I held you  
 For months comfort you  
 loosing you was dreadful  
 painfully like a friend  
 cutting me over over times  
 Again how can you be so  
 mean when all I wanted  
 Was my son  
 Him, he is all I live  
 For without his touch  
 His love  
 Nothing would be the same  
 Treasure your child in-  
 side of you

Prison life was home

A safety place from  
 The human world

The pain has stopped  
 Pure morphine sliding  
 down my throat, Yummy  
 Yummy

Paste it to my chest  
     Gives me the rush  
 I used to enjoy it now  
 I crave it give me more lots'  
 It's better than anything I ever  
 tried its quiet soft relaxing  
 Only if I have enough

You lay softly, comfortably

Lazing out loud yet in peace

Without the drunks and

Perpetrators who've ventured into

My bed like animal on a hunt

    And I'm the prey

Your life is different, pure

    My tears run like current

My bumps are red my heart is red

Is my tears red do they look watery

But in actuality my tears are

Red

Red is blood, my blood

    -blood comes in many

    forms' forms' of many

    pain, tears, running like rivers rushing currents

Am I racist towards them (white)

I think I am really I do  
with everything  
I feel anger towards  
what they've done to this land  
towards my son and I.  
its awful.

I feel awful, I hate this  
Doctor she's so racist

Problems with

Medical, medical  
Did I ask. Did I asks  
For this, did I ask  
For help. Why wasn't it  
there when I needed it  
When I speak no one Listen.  
They see, Native Indian  
Drunk, drugging stealer  
Thief no good, people  
Wasted people  
Every part of my contact  
Is a problem

Dreams run far and wide

Such a dream of laughter

Holiday greetings

    Much fun in the soul

Heart

    Bring pain joy peace

love

My darling

    See it that my tears

shall fall no more

Your death cuts deep within

Leaving an aching pain

That's lasted a lifetime

I've tasted your lips

Many times

We held every moment

I thought of you

You took me in your arms

At the time I needed it

The most.

The beating of your heart

Was like the sounds of thunder

Off in the distance they were

coming

Without guilt they took

You and left me behind

Walls with chains

Do you remember me as I do of you

Lighten strike my heart

Couple sitting at peace

both looking tired, worned out

probably by attending radiations

for days on end    looking at peace

    with themselves, which

I'll never share with someone

too many doubts.

Kill my pain everytime

I see you so every time

I touch your little fingers

Your my best friend

your pure at heart don't

loose that

be free

why is he wonderful to

me?

Peace is at large – is

There such as thing

To be saying

Truth lies and death comes to us all.

Fear is not what grow it

comes with the unknown

So tomorrow I live in fear..... do I?

Super ready funny faces

Funny lines

They help with the

Sadness that cut like

A blade I went out

Funny faces

Funny question

My son is my true self

he's honest, forgiving, loving

unconditional

never finding that, everyone

wants something from

me. Then their gone my

son love is pure at heart

Cerruts Seech \_\_\_\_\_ mother father

Grandfather

Grandmother

Nothing

Nothing

Nothing

What does the word mean

~~Black~~

~~Black~~

How I can empower

Each word into goodness.

Your adventurous attitude is out

Standing

Mommy he says

Joyous to my heart

Mommy to demanding

Every day of his life I love you so much

Run

Let's run away from all this

Sadness

Time. We need move time

tear drops'

running down my cheeks'

like a river

Sometimes it slips

In two why why

Why so much depression

Is it you or is it me



Credits, credits

Life would get me more  
credit.

Geeze this is it I'm  
lost help me feel myself

I can't breath  
I safety comes first,  
Man why I can't I feel safe

With you all by yourself  
can I trust your dad

To be safe.  
Man give me one more  
credit.

Strength he been through through  
Again again time time again

Olle count of ten

Your tiny fingers  
Comfortably wrapped  
In my hands  
My love for you  
Has grown pure for you  
For you my son have

Shown the happiness  
These bring me home  
Home Home is where  
you are. My son my son  
my only son. Your pure  
heart fill my empty soul  
    filling me with hope  
    of each day danger  
come, you've broken through  
me filling my demon into  
angels of love happiness  
    my son I loved since  
day one when you laid  
upon my hands, safe and  
    sound you laid without  
fear knowing I'll catch  
you if you fall my only  
son.....  
My life has been for you  
    For you only  
                    Stue jr cook  
Every dawn  
    The sun shines

Your smile shines through  
To my soul.  
Each breath of life  
Bring on another day

With you

not a tear has fallen  
For the day will  
come and the heaven  
open then and there  
shall my tears fall.

They ruffle my demons

Asking if I want dilutus'  
Why do?  
I'm not wanting to be addicted  
Its seems they want to put every  
Drug into my system  
What can I do take them  
For one month then change it  
my call,.  
Its sad! sad! sad!  
I want free from them  
Free of pain

Pain into my soul

My soul burns

My son I feel for him

everyday he suffers'

in sadness.

What can I do to ease that loniness

free your saddiness

each thought you have

I want to know

When will you tell me

All your pain pain

I'm sorry I couldn't be

everything you want

wanting a family mommy and

a daddy

He laid peacefully on my

bed cute cuddly and at

Peace.

I wondered what he was

dreaming of with a smile

wrapped his whole face

then he sat in toned with

the two toys he took on  
the bus bright white  
to go future 4 native  
then quickly he saw me  
starin waving I wandered  
what he was thinking  
holding back tears, seeing him off will we ever see each  
other again  
    every thought run back to  
the day we had to separate  
    like knives stabbing at  
my heart day in day out