

## Program and Policy Development from a Holistic Aboriginal Perspective

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Indian cultures have ways of thought, learning, teaching, and communicating that are different than but of equal validity to those of White cultures. These throughways stand at the beginning of Indian time and are the foundations of our children's lives. Their full flower is in what it means to be one of the people. (Hampton, cited in Battiste & Barman, 1995, p. 78)

The autonomous social welfare history of Aboriginal peoples in this country is very recent. By "autonomous," I mean that Aboriginal communities are involved in the management and provision of social welfare programs such as welfare payments (1960s), child welfare programs and agencies (1970s), addictions treatment and programs (1970s), community-based health programs and centres (1980s), and early childhood education programs and services (1990s). However, these programs and services are not autonomous in the following aspects:

- the design of these programs;
- the setting of standards or modes of delivery of these programs;
- the permanency of these programs, which largely remain funded year to year in a project context, with no funding agreements designating them as permanent institutional elements of the community; and
- the policies governing the programs, agencies, or services.

With regard to operational policies, the federal funders' views of Aboriginal programming, especially in the social program arena, mirror the provincial government standard, except where caseloads are concerned. There is no clear standard for caseloads specific to Aboriginal programs. In provinces other than Ontario, which has an agreement with the federal government for social programs for First Nations, caseload standards are not applied. Furthermore, program policies are outside the purview of decision making and, for the most part, are outside the purview of influence with regard to culture or contextualization of programs.

Even though Aboriginal communities have evolved in their comprehension and capacity to deliver and implement social welfare programs, they

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have not been provided with autonomy to do programming in a way that fully takes into account the culture of their people. In most cases where Aboriginal communities have taken a great deal of time to conceptualize more *culturally appropriate* models of program or policy delivery, the bureaucrats they work with in various government departments have not engaged in such rigorous conceptual thinking. Rather, governance issues preoccupy the discussions between Aboriginal groups and governments. In discussions of the approach to programs, practice modalities, program standards, protocol agreements, and prevention versus intervention as a strategy, the bureaucrats seem to think that there is an effective means of addressing such issues in society already. So why change when dealing with Aboriginal populations? However, Aboriginal communities would like to implement in their own way the programs that flow from the policies established by Aboriginal leaders. This would include program development (standards, protocols, and case management; program staffing and training; accountability and spending priorities). Most policy directions articulated by governments hint at the possibility of meeting the cultural needs of Aboriginal populations, but in practice, the bureaucratic mindset prevails. This has been a frustrating experience for Aboriginal peoples.

Traditions and cultures are inherited elements of social groups. They come to us from our ancestors with the requirement that we work to protect the essential elements of the culture so that it has a sense of permanence. The essential elements are these:

- the nature of relationships among the people;
- the ceremonies;
- the dances, songs, drums, and gatherings; and
- the medicines, which are both physical and spiritual.

As humans, we share the responsibility to nurture our culture, and we all have cultures to draw upon, if one goes back far enough in time. My sense is that prior to the Industrial Revolution, the essential natures of all people connected to a greater reality was strong.

It is important that the traditional cultures of Aboriginal peoples be expressed in the social welfare programs that we evolve for ourselves. The government of the present era has acknowledged this principle of Aboriginal programming. Examples are evident in programs such as those emerging in health transfer, child welfare, restorative justice and correctional initiatives, and in community-based education movements. Each of these examples represent movements in the right direction, although each is at a different stage of indigenization.

What has been difficult is undoing the institutional mindset of the "keepers of the Western tradition," who find it hard to grasp the scope of the change required in Aboriginal social welfare programming to make this happen. Aboriginal groups are indicating that they want to fully express their holistic world view in these programs. These programs need to have policies, standards,

and modes of practice that truly reflect the reality of Aboriginal social welfare programming. This chapter will attempt to conceptualize an Aboriginal approach to program and policy development and describe how it would work.

This chapter is about understanding. It is about reframing an existing understanding within the Canadian mindset about Aboriginal peoples and the nature of social policy development regarding these Canadian citizens. Canadian Aboriginal peoples reside in Canada as a home territory. They do not reside here as an immigrant population, and therefore their relationship to this territory is rooted in a historical relationship, a cultural relationship, and an intimate relationship. They have, however, been the recipients of a foreign policy put into place hundreds of years ago, a policy that has not essentially changed.

An important concept for this chapter is the type of relationship that needs to emerge between Aboriginal peoples and the newcomers and to enable meaningful policy and program development. I would characterize this relationship as a *dialectic relationship*. One would expect that such a relationship would have already developed between them after so many generations, but this is not the case. In social work theory, we read about the importance of establishing a dialectic relationship with the people with whom we work. This relationship is characterized as follows:

1. It is egalitarian; the helper and the helped are equal in their *worth*, in their *importance* to the relationship.
2. It permits a range of views that are not *judged* by either member of the relationship, but which add to the *knowledge* of each person in better understanding where the other person *comes from* and what his/her experience has been.
3. It is based on the *trust* required to achieve the outcome. It has to be seen at many *levels* and experienced over a period of *time*. That is, it is not transitory. The statements "I mean what I say" or "I walk my talk" need to be real.
4. It operates not only on a linear or logical level but also allows and encourages the exploration of intuition, feeling, and values.

In the past, I would have concluded that it is in the hands of the newcomers to enable the development of this dialectic relationship, yet Freire takes a different view. He challenges the oppressed to be proactive on the matter:

This then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both. (Freire, 1970, p. 28)

I used to get very angry when I read this statement because it makes it the responsibility of the oppressed to find enough love and kindness to liberate themselves and others. But as with an Elder's teaching, the truth behind the thought cannot be escaped. I therefore strove to find the means of securing knowledge to underpin the action I needed to facilitate the journey to mutual freedom. This freedom would provide the basis to a good life for all concerned.

I will therefore provide insight into the knowledge base of the Aboriginal world view to help us all create a social policy process that supports a healthy dialectic relationship and a discourse that sustains the process. As a Malecite Indian (I use this term deliberately) who grew up on the Tobique Indian reserve in New Brunswick, and who worked in the social service field for ten years of direct practice in setting up reserve-based agencies in the late 1970s, I have been on the front line of the development of Aboriginal services. I have influenced policy development for community-based agencies and researched Aboriginal processes and systems that are responsive to community needs. I have taught social work for over twenty years to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in a mainstream school of social work. I have come to realize that we all need to work together, all people of all races, because we all share the responsibility of keeping The Circle strong. I cherish the moment an Elder took time to teach me this knowledge and to find a place for it in my own outlook in life. Bellefeuille supports this outcome when he and his colleagues look at child welfare evolution among First Nations: "Shared vision involves developing a shared vision of the future with guiding principles and practices to realize that vision. A shared vision is one that involves the skills of unearthing shared pictures of the future that foster commitment versus compliance" (Bellefeuille, Garrioch, & Ricks, 1997, p. 24).

Paradigm shift may be an appropriate way to describe the work that has to be done in order to achieve the dialectic result. This view is expressed in the report of the Special Parliamentary Committee on Indian Self-Government:

The committee is strongly convinced that a major change in the orientation of federal policy must occur. There is little benefit to be gained by tinkering with the Indian Act or by adjusting the present policy of devolution (transfer of funds and authority to First Nations communities by means of funding arrangements that are not rooted in legal standing or policy authority). (Ponting 1986, p. 339)

Native writers agree that there needs to be a paradigm shift. In an Awasis Agency publication, *Mee-noo-stah-tan Mi-ni-si-win*, the point is made by Senge:

Paradigms are the broader mental sets or world views which influence the kinds of models we develop and/or adopt. Paradigms are pictures of reality, or particular ways of constructing social realities which are shaped by our own needs and assumptions. And Thomas Kuhn... suggested that

paradigm shifts occur over time, as more and more dysfunction develops with a certain model or paradigm. Attempts to rescue the paradigm through reforms and adjustments eventually break down as the dysfunction becomes too great. (Awasis Agency of Northern Manitoba, 1997, p. 7)

It has been my experience that Canada has become aware that things have not worked for Aboriginal populations when it comes to health policies, justice policies, governance policies, social welfare and educational policies. The dysfunction of applying a mainstream paradigm of "social well-being" and its resulting programming to Aboriginal populations has become more and more evident. The oppressive nature of the existing relationship does not lead to functioning Aboriginal populations. It has not resulted in a dialectic relationship that enriches both parties.

Governments of all political parties have not been able to achieve their policy goals regarding Aboriginal populations. The implication of the constitutional entrenchment of Aboriginal rights and the creation of equal citizenship for Aboriginal peoples was that there would be an acknowledgment of the totality of Aboriginal reality. This means that there could be an expression of the Aboriginal world view within the confines of their own community. It also means that the attendant elements of the Aboriginal world view—including governance, cultural and traditional practices, and social organization—could be expressed.

However, a major obstacle in implementing the new paradigm has been the scarcity of resources. The entrenchment of Aboriginal rights in Section 35 of the Canadian constitution actually limits the resources available to all Aboriginal populations. Now fiscal allocations have to be distributed among all Aboriginal populations, and not just among the Status Indians, as indicated by the Indian Act. All governments of all parties now need to operationalize their strategies toward all Aboriginal populations within this Act. The groups entitled to be recognized under the rubric "Aboriginal" now include the following: Status Indians, as defined by the Indian Act; Métis populations, as defined in relationship to definitions worked out with provincial and federal governments; Inuit populations, which in the past were cared for exclusively by territorial governments; and Non-status Indians, who for reasons of marriage or enfranchisement can now reassert their Aboriginal entitlement. Thus, the available pool of resources, which was originally intended to be spent only on Status Indians living on reserves, must now be extended to cover entitlements to Indians off-reserve as well as other Aboriginal populations. Limiting such entitlements is becoming a full-time operation for governments, especially in this era of burgeoning Aboriginal populations.

### Mainstream Social Policy and Social Welfare Programming

Every citizen of Canada is a social welfare recipient. Each one of us is a direct beneficiary of one or more provincial or federal programs that are part of the complex structures of Canadian social services.

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In the Canadian constitution, the federal government has exclusive responsibility for social welfare matters dealing with Indians and their land and inherent rights; naturalization (immigration); criminal law; establishment, maintenance, and management of penitentiaries. The provinces have primary jurisdiction of social welfare issues that are not included in this specific list of federal powers.

Social policy can be defined as "action or inaction taken by public authorities to address problems which deal with human health, safety or well-being" (Westhues, 1999). Three major groups are crucially involved in determining the outcomes of a policy process: politicians, bureaucrats, and pressure groups. The influence of each of these groups differs at various times, depending on the composition of each group and on the information and insights available to those studying the process (Wharf & McKenzie, 1998). The Cabinet is the core institution for determining priorities, however. This means that while no one part of the political system has a monopoly over the determination of priorities where new policies are concerned, the Cabinet is by far the most important institution involved (Van Loon & Whittington, 1987, p. 337).

I would like to demonstrate the distinctions in the social policy process between the Aboriginal process and the mainstream process. It is important to underscore that social policy decision making in the Aboriginal process is rooted in the perceptions of the people of the communities, and that they play an active role in interpreting, priority setting, and evaluating the directions of policy. It is not a process isolated from people and located in the bureaucracy, as we see in the mainstream process.

Table 15.1 illustrates the potentially differing perspectives of Aboriginal peoples and mainstream contexts regarding the social welfare policy process. I have drawn on the thinking of George and Wilding (1985) and Douglass and Friedmann (1998) in making this analysis.

As one can see, the fundamental differences between the Aboriginal and mainstream approaches rest in the motivations for both the policy process and in the planning that flows from the policy process. The people within the context are differentially considered by the two processes, with a consequent loss of citizenship and democracy in the mainstream process. The two systems are fundamentally at odds with each other. However, that does not necessarily mean that the two processes are so different that they do not make sense to each other or that the fundamental differences make it impossible to communicate with each other. The two-row wampum example given in this text alerts us that work needs to be done to make the fundamental differences actionable to achieve good results.

Social poli  
process

**Table 15.1 Aboriginal and Mainstream Policy-Making Processes Compared**

Aboriginal Social Policy and Social Welfare Planning	Mainstream Social Policy and Social Welfare Planning
<p><b>1. Ideology/World View</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collectivist (collective responsibility for well-being of all); leadership is for service to the people</li> <li>• All people are equal</li> <li>• Freedom—being able to count on collective support and solidarity</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Ideology/World View</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individualistic (individual and family are primarily responsible for their own well-being, with help for the "deserving"); leadership represents the interests of elites</li> <li>• Inequality acceptable</li> <li>• Freedom—limited government intervention</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Justice and Humanism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Justice rests in the well-being of the collective and is contained within the consciousness of the collective; it is a relationship</li> <li>• The circle of humanity includes all people of the community, and the weakest need to be supported for the benefit of all</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. Justice and Humanism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Justice rests in the responsibilities of a system of justice; it is about the harm done to the state, not the harm done to the relationship with other people</li> <li>• All humans are as equal as is possible within a system of institutions and services, and within the confines of an economy</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Theory of Planning/Policy-making</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive, not expert driven; concerned with the equity of policies for all people, and people have a voice in what is good for them</li> <li>• "Circular," not linear; multidimensional and holistic, interrelated and inclusive</li> <li>• Intuitive as well as meaningful to the people who are concerned or affected by the outcome of the process, based on their own experience</li> <li>• Strength based</li> </ul>	<p><b>3. Theory of Planning/Policy-making</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rational and comprehensive and takes into account the views of experts in the field; may reflect the views of a representative sample of the people affected by the policy/program</li> <li>• Positivist and linear; not as sensitive to interconnection with a broad range of policy systems</li> <li>• Logical, non-intuitive, legislated; not based on experience of people affected by the outcome of the process</li> <li>• Deficit/medical model</li> </ul>

### Social Policy Process

The important observation in social policy is that the mainstream approach is a closed system of relationships between the key power holders of the political party system, their set of interests, the need to develop initiatives that enhance the chances of being re-elected, and those that a majority of voters can support through popular opinion. The players in this process need to be able to trust each other, and to solicit the best views and opinions of outsiders who can be trusted. The element of trust within the system makes it operate so that the following takes place:

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process

1. The perceptions of mainstream Canadians are reflected in the proposed legislation, making it acceptable to them to spend tax money on these policy initiatives.
2. It fits the agenda of the ruling party.
3. The information generated is vetted by people who are trusted or at least trustworthy, and the views of these people will not generate too much opposition from unknown sources.
4. The measures proposed would pass through Cabinet.

The parties involved in policy development and the progressively higher levels of the administrative process need to be able to trust each other. Therefore, they examine each other with regard to their sympathy of identity; that is, they seem pretty much like each other. The higher the level of authority and influence, the more like each other they become. This is not necessarily a negative thing, but a reality that those of us who want to influence such people and processes need to know. This reality is one of the difficult elements in introducing what seem like radically different processes, such as those rooted in a holistic Aboriginal world view. It is difficult to affect people in positions of power because "getting to them" is a very difficult process of proving that such perspectives and processes make sense or are workable. Yet I suggest that the perspective influencing the Canadian policy view, such as that contained in the "population health" perspective, provides us with hope. This population health perspective includes the socio-economic health of Canadians, which allows us to look at factors such as poverty in health outcomes.

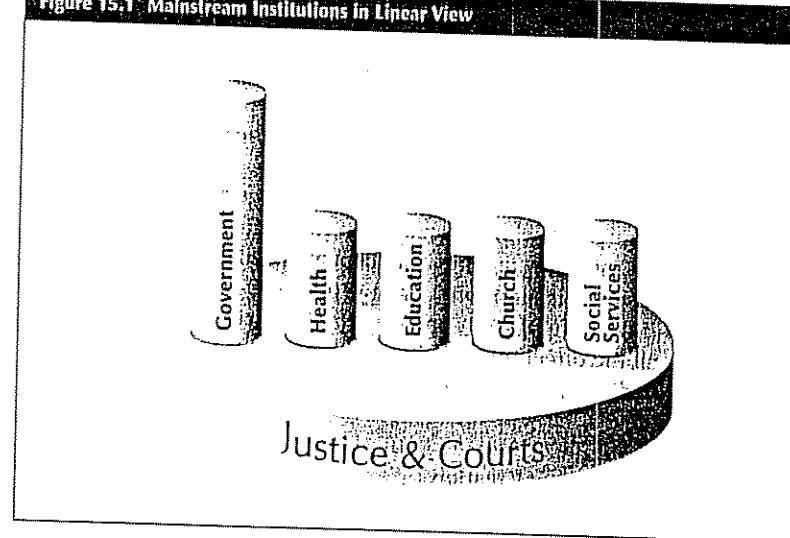
The governing party that holds power via elections needs to be able to determine that its elective goal is supported by the policies set and the antecedent processes of program design and implementation. The influence of marginalized people with radically different world views is severely minimized in this scenario. It is therefore the job of marginalized people to make themselves understood and to make room for their paradigms in this policy scenario. It would be naive to think otherwise. It is the task of this chapter to enable that understanding. I have observed that Canada has made room in recent years for such an undertaking. The notions of "restorative," "healing," or "holistic" paradigms have gained acceptance. There has also been an effort not only to root these notions in the experience and knowledge of the mainstream, but also to apply them to settings other than the medical/health settings. I have seen departments of Justice, Health, Correctional Services, Indian Affairs, and Social Services grasp the notion in a logical and linear way. It is now important to set them in a holistic way into the change processes of Aboriginal Peoples.

This mainstream paradigm of social policy development and the nature of institutional reality with regard to society are expressed in the following diagram, which I constructed as a useful tool for myself. This diagram illustrates the independent nature of the institutions, and shows that government operates as an institution unto itself. It may have a directive function with

regard to the other institutions, but the accountability of the other institutions to government is not evident. The autonomy of the institutional structures is an important element of their existence, since they need to have autonomy to fulfill the tasks expected of them without undue interference from other agencies.

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Figure 15.1: Mainstream Institutions in Linear View



This figure demonstrates the individualistic nature of the institutions of society. They exist for their own sake; that is, their primary goal becomes that of ensuring their existence rather than fulfilling the mission for which they were created. They compete with each other for funding, influence, importance, position, but not for service to their clientele. In fact, clientele must configure themselves to the culture of the institution.

An interesting dimension of this diagram is the place and responsibility of the institution of justice. Its place as the foundation or fabric upon which society is built, reminding society of its civilized nature, is more an illustration than a reality. The justice institution should be a reminder to society of its responsibility to its citizens. The outcomes of the dialectic relationship would inform the notion of a civil society as construed within the definition of civil law.

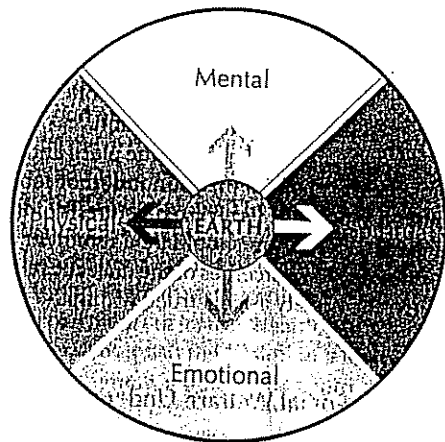
### Aboriginal Social Welfare Understandings

Social welfare can be defined, within a capitalist paradigm and with a liberal perspective, as a complex network of legislation, policies, programs, institutions, professions, resources, and services that ensures for individuals access to a range of goods and services necessary to achieve their full potential in a manner acceptable to them and with due regard to the rights of others.

Aboriginal populations with a holistic world view would add to this definition in the following manner: Ensuring the well-being of all people is the inherent responsibility of all people for one another, without consideration of class, gender, ability, sexual preference, or cultural orientation. In simple fact, we are all one in Creation. We fulfill our responsibility through the provision of programs, institutions, professions, resources and services that are accessible and responsive to the needs of people—not to the political viability of such elements of social order. In the holistic model, the institutions of society, in Figure 15.1, would dedicate themselves to the service of meeting people's needs, the purpose for which they were created. Their efforts and work would be an investment in the well-being of society and in the Creation that we are all a part of.

Figure 15.2 shows us the basic conceptual teachings of holistic traditions. The figure is in four parts, with each part facing in a different direction: north, east, south, west. Each direction has a concept attached to it; north is mental, east is spiritual, south is emotional, west is physical. All of these elements are reflected in the life of each person. The important thing is that we acknowledge all the directions in others, although this may sometimes be difficult. All the directions make a whole, a *one*. When one part is missing, there is no longer a totality. Included is the notion of the centre as the source and driving force of the system. All of this is embedded in the notion of the nurturing Mother Earth or Creation.

Figure 15.2 Basic Holistic Representation: The Circle in Four Directions



This Circle (Figure 15.2) teaches us that we are all one. The Circle is fragile because whatever happens affects all the other components of the *whole*.

No one is unaffected by the plight and experience of others. The centre contains our human spirit, which is the spark of the Creator from which we get our nature as people. We are provided with insight, anticipation, and understanding. Our job throughout our lives is to nurture this insight and to make the spark glow. The bond among us as elements of Creation (the whole) is our relationships and the behaviours that emerge from these relationships. The directions are all equal; no one direction is more prominent or important than another.

The notion of deserving or undeserving does not exist in this holistic scenario, as all that is provided to humans by Creation—whether it be wealth or space or time—is for the benefit of all people. The exploitation of any people by another group of people hurts everyone. Creation and reality are made up of both tangible (empirical) and non-tangible (spiritual, for lack of a better word) aspects. Our viability as humans depends on preserving both the tangible and the non-tangible. It is through the spirit in which we carry out our work to meet the social welfare needs of others that the world remains viable and valuable. If we do not carry out our work in a good spirit, the spirit and viability of those we affect is diminished.

Figure 15.3 Areas of Inquiry to Arrive at a Holistic Information Base

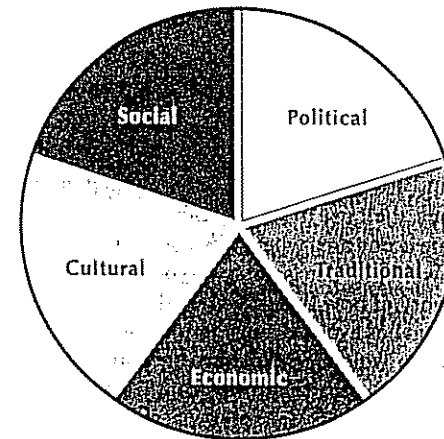


Figure 15.3 provides us with a useful holistic way of analyzing the consequences of our behaviour. It also provides us with an analytical tool with which to anticipate the outcomes of behaviours before we engage in them. It provides us with a way of understanding and constructing the welfare measures we hope to put into place. At the same time, it demonstrates the ripple effect of a measure applied in one component of the whole affecting the other

parts of the whole. For example, if we were to consider the implementation or creation of a child welfare agency for a community, we could not simply engage in determining the organizational and staffing structure, or the fiscal requirements of the agency. The agency must be structured in ways that meet the needs of the community as defined in the holistic world view. We also could not formulate the policies and protocols under which the agency would operate without considering the implications for the social and cultural structures of a given community or context. If we were to place this agency in a perspective of holistic healing, as is required by our culture as Aboriginal peoples, then we must consider how all the elements of the agency enable that process. This would include staffing, budgeting, planning of buildings, activities within the agency, the words and intent of documents created, and the place of traditional practices within the whole development.

Aboriginal teachings remind us that we must be contemplative about our efforts. We must be able to comprehend the impacts of our efforts not just on the tangible reality of humans but also on the non-tangible elements of Creation. A teaching that is powerful in this context is that all elements of Creation are related, and our whole reality is affected by any measures we put in place. The cultures of people are affected by measures rooted in the cultures of other people. For example, First Nations and their cultures are affected by the imposition of spiritual practices rooted in the Christian religion. The Aboriginal traditional practices honour the members of the animal and plant world as relatives, and without these relatives, our viability as humans is not possible. However, this view is judged unacceptable by the Christian traditions, even though there are similar beliefs in some Christian cultures.

In a more tangible case related to social work practice, the use of holistic healing practices could be challenged as not being rooted in the rigour of other empirically and academically based traditional practices of social work as a profession. Thus, their use in social work as a profession could be questioned. Child welfare is one area where this issue arises. In fact, though, most mainstream social work practice is not based on empirical findings at all, but on somebody's theory of how things will work best. What the mainstream social work profession has avoided considering, for the most part, is the spiritual aspect of life. This avoidance may have been in an effort to smooth over divisions among diverse cultural groups that were grounded in religious beliefs, thus creating greater "social order" or "social cohesion." The holistic perspective allows us to acknowledge spirituality once again, as spirituality is a resource that many people draw on in dealing with their troubles.

Child welfare practice is an area heavily influenced by the values, world views, and expectations of a certain class of people in mainstream society. The conclusion of policy makers is that most middle-class Canadians favour a certain kind of child welfare practice. The aim of protecting children from imminent danger means defining imminent danger. This definition includes not just physical harm but harm arising out of a lack of parental control and

children being placed in harmful situations. These situations include the conditions arising from poverty, such as unsafe housing, unsanitary conditions, or unfamiliar parenting techniques. The primary consideration of the practice of child welfare is the safety of the child. However, the social worker's perception of safety and harm is determined by the culture in which the worker has been brought up and educated. These standards and norms also determine how the worker perceives the safety of an environment. When the investigative dimension of this practice unfolds, so do the values and world views of the workers and policy makers. Thus the elements of Figure 15.3 that are emphasized are the social and cultural elements, which are within a certain system of values.

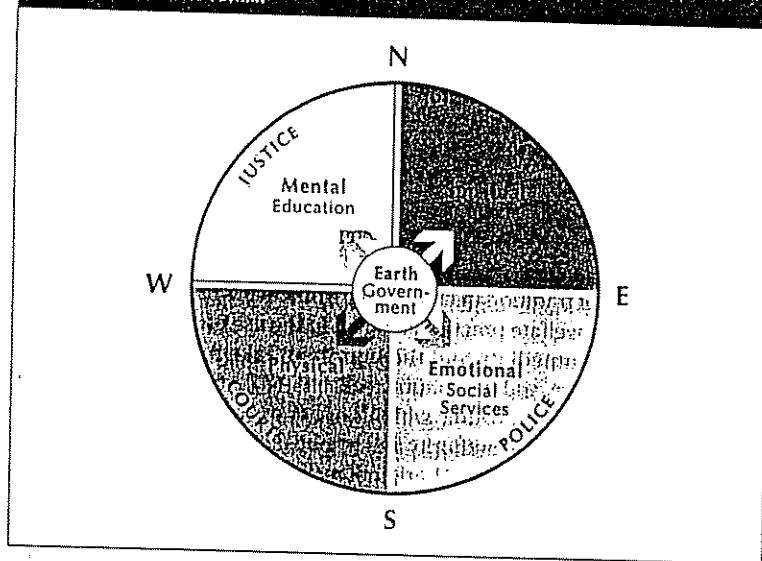
The element of tradition in child welfare practice is historic practice, and mainstream child welfare practice is rooted in the use of authority and judgment. Here, the immediate and the imminent take precedence over the potential of the future, and the cultural reality of the context is not considered. The practitioner as an individual with his or her own set of cultural assumptions has decision-making authority and responsibility. In contrast, in a holistic approach, which considers Aboriginal reality and the Circle analysis, the practitioner would partner with people from the context. Decision making would be communal, and the determination of the next step would be consultative and not rooted only in the immediate and the imminent. The values of the community's culture would be respected and preserved, and the whole community would be involved in resolving the problem with the child and the family. Politics, economics, tradition, social relationship, and cultural values would all be preserved.

### The Holistic Policy Process

Figure 15.4 allows us to view the relationship of the same institutions represented in Figure 15.1, but within the holistic world view of Aboriginal peoples. It shows an interdependence, an interrelationship, an interconnection, that strengthen society for all people. The institutions are geared to work for a social order's healthy existence. The Aboriginal approach would attempt to be more egalitarian, more of a partnership. This perspective also looks beyond the nuclear family and even beyond the extended family to the community to determine how the child can best be cared for. The Aboriginal model is based on values and cultural practices that could be useful in mainstream contexts as well.

Within this image of institutions people are at the centre. The people are the basis for all institutions and their functions, and have come forth from Creation, which is usually symbolized by the colour green. This Creation is embodied in our Mother Earth. The Earth provides us with all we need to live, and we have a great responsibility to respect all that Mother Earth provides. Through this respectful world view and our respectful behaviour, we

Figure 15.4 First Nations Traditional Directions with Mainstream Institutions in Circle Format



sustain the Earth and it will always sustain us. Without it, we will all perish. If people are the expression and the embodiment of this Creation, then we need to be reflective people, respectful people. We need to prepare ourselves for this responsibility in various ways, but in the end, we need to understand our responsibility.

In preparing ourselves for this responsibility, we must first understand and articulate what respect is and how we might embody it. We must place ourselves in humility so that we will be open to hearing the meaning of the knowledge people give in their stories of life. We need to be reflective in the context of others who are preparing themselves so that a collective consensus will emerge that provides wise insight and mutual understanding. We must engage in ceremony and work at being loving people who are strong enough to leave behind authority and power in favour of being one of, not one above. We need to present our thoughts and considerations to the people of the community and to learn from their insights. We need to adopt a language that allows us to communicate with them and use them in our processes, so that their words have meaning and impact. We must be willing to leave the process and allow others to emerge as leaders with their skills and gifts.

Social welfare and social policy are human processes wherein humans interrelate to achieve an outcome, which is policy statements and actions. We who do this work must therefore be special human beings. We must get ourselves ready and, finally, prove ourselves worthy to be participants in the process, to carry the truth of other humans, and we must be clear thinking

and thoughtful as we engage in the process with other humans. It cannot be a process rooted in anger or resentment, or prejudice and racism. It must essentially be a human process.

Conclu:

### Conclusion

We must put together all the Circles that we see above: the four directions teaching, the holistic analysis, and the holistic institutional visioning. We must pray for good direction and wisdom. We must ultimately be good leaders.

I have been told that leadership is a lonely journey, and that leaders are recognized by people because of the spirit they carry, a spirit that is seen before their physical presence arrives. They are able to have the Eagle's vision, which sees the interconnections and the interrelationship as if from a great height. They understand responsibility and the nature of the responsibility of their vision. But these are understandings that imply an active and lifelong process to achieve. They are qualities that are not transferable. Leadership is also contextual: different people possess leadership in different ways and in different places. Therefore, ego cannot be a major element of leaders because ego will blind them to the leadership insights of other people.

We need to perceive ourselves as leaders and to behave as leaders for all of our people, regardless of whether we are Aboriginal or not. Social welfare processes are about transformations and reaffirmations of citizens and of a civilized society, as Douglas and Friedmann point out:

I see ... planners passionately engaged in a transformative politics for inclusion, opportunity for self-development and social justice. It is a politics driven by the energies of a civil society that is beginning to reassert itself in all of its diversity. Its vision is for a social formation where no one is excluded from the rights and duties of full citizenship. (Douglas & Friedmann, 1998, p. 34)

Freire (1970) reminded us that "Only the power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both (the oppressor and the oppressed)." One of my teaching Elders, Dr. Danny Musqua, reminded me that the fundamental purpose of life is for us to fan the spark of the Creator, which resides in all of us at our birth. If we do not fan this spark, it is destined to remain always just a spark. In order to have it burn in our lives, the spark needs constant attention and nurturing.

By engaging in the creation of social policy processes and outcomes for the benefit of all people, we are fanning the spark. We also learn that the essential purpose of life is not how great we can make ourselves individually but how great we can be in the context of all other people. We need to help create great human beings.

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