

Learning to Trust

**A Summary of Client Experiences
of the Mook'am Program**

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"The circle brought us together. Learning to trust with our own secrets, and trusting your secrets with others. This is the most significant part of healing. Knowing that others are experiencing too. Building the support system is good too. Being in the circle and showing the different parts of healing. Being supportive of people who are dealing with something that you have already dealt with. The effort that you put into the relationship makes it all worthwhile."

(Mook'am client)

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The nature of program evaluation sometimes makes it difficult work. Often we are treated as necessary evils. This has not been the case in this project...at least not so far! Thanks to Kenn Richard and all the staff for making me feel welcome during the various stages of the over-all project.

But most of all, a very special thanks to the six women who agreed to be interviewed. They shared insights into the program, and at times personal reactions to very important events in their lives. We thank them for their trust, and for their contributions to Mook'am.

Frank Maidman

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Introduction

As an important part of the Mook'am evaluation project, six clients agreed to participate in an intensive interview concerning their participation in the program. This working paper is a summary of the results.

Client Background

Native Identity

All sample clients had Native heritage. However, in terms of their Native self-concept, there were obvious differences. Asked to describe themselves in terms of being Native, the sample clients used different descriptions. These ranged from very traditional to non-traditional. No client wanted to distance herself from being Native, although one expressed some on-going discomfort.

Those with more traditional leanings know, participate, and are committed to Native culture (singing, dancing, language use).

But even those viewing themselves as "an urban Indian", "contemporary", or simply "not a traditional Indian" are all in the process of becoming exposed to Native culture and friends.

Several seem somewhat uncomfortable with city life.

"I'm not a city person. I hate the city. I feel like I'm stuck here and shouldn't be here."

"If I wasn't living in T.O. I would be living back home and going to the Longhouse."

Family Participation

With the exception of two women, all sample clients participated in the program with other family members. Two are involved with a daughter or son. One has her children involved and her husband.

One client's boyfriend is involved.

Two clients wanted to encourage the participation of other significant people in their lives.

Previous Agency Experiences and Program Expectations

Nearly all sample clients had previously participated in main-stream helping agencies, and all reported very negative experiences. One person had been previously involved with NCFST, and had negative experiences which left her not trusting. On a friend's advice she gave the Mook'am program a chance.

Alienation and negativity towards main-stream agencies was expressed in different ways:

"[In Mook'am] I was able to work at my own pace. In the past, someone else made my decisions for me and that is why I withdrew."

" I expected things to be different. I didn't have to prove myself. I could come with all my baggage and not be judged. I went to a non-native agency and had experienced that prejudice. I expected to be accepted."

"Previous efforts to seek counselling from CAS, etc. hadn't worked out because I was drinking and taking drugs...honesty and commitment won me over... Recognizing the downfall before it happens. The C.A.S. did not recognize any of the signs. I went to C.A.S. and through all that, they weren't helping at all."

"I was so down and fed up with therapy and counselling, I did not know what to expect really."

These negative experiences helped shape their expectations for NCFST and the Mook'am program. People were looking for the comfort of being in the company of Native people. As well, they sought support and freedom of self-expression, acceptance and an opportunity to work at a comfortable pace.

What Did Clients Hope to Get Out of the Program?

Clients were asked to recall their initial hopes and expectations for the program. These hopes were expressed in different ways. Some described the help they expected for their children. Others looked no farther than the healing process itself (eg. "a chance to grieve", opportunity for self expression), and did not think in terms of concrete changes.

There were some, however, who expressed fairly specific hopes for personal change. These were expressed primarily in terms of feeling better, functioning independently, or achieving their potential.

If there is any discernable commonality, it appears that clients were focused on emotional growth or the "inner life". They were less likely to talk about anticipated changes in behavior, relationships, social or economic functioning, and more likely to talk about feelings. They wanted a chance to grieve, to feel happier, to understand their feelings, and remove the torment.

For some, personal betterment would ultimately come from self-understanding or insight into themselves, their problems and their feelings.

Client Access to the Program

Mook'am clients live the kinds of lives that could potentially create barriers to easy access and on-going participation in the program. Some live out of town in near-by cities, or are distant from the city's central core. Others have families. Still others are financially strapped, making transportation and baby-sitting costs seem formidable. Others have demanding jobs.

Apart from material conditions, the emotional reality also poses threats to steady participation. At times sexual abuse victims become withdrawn or have flash-backs. Family or interpersonal crises also occur.

The distance from home to office was mentioned, but otherwise no serious complaints were registered about accessing the program or staff as needed. Clients spoke warmly about receiving help for baby-sitting and transportation, and were particularly impressed with staff flexibility:

"If Charlene hasn't heard from me, we have an understanding. She really takes time to understand that I need time and doesn't judge me if I miss an appointment"

"Cindy has changed her hours to accomodate me and my daughters; I really appreciate that."

Clients talked of how staff created an atmosphere of accessibility and responsiveness, such that they feel free to call at any time.

"They tell us that if anything happens, to call, and I have called. Even the receptionist will listen to me."

"Charlene and Cindy always return my calls whenever I need them. Everyone is good at returning calls."

For some, accessibility to staff was a problem during staff holidays and after-hours family crises.

"The only bad thing was when I was ...having flashbacks and two of the workers were on vacation and I couldn't get anyone to talk to. Although the hospital psychiatrist helped a little."

"When the crisis happened...I think there should be an answering service so I could call somebody".

General Reactions

Reactions to Space and Facilities

" There is Indian stuff all over the place. I liked that. You have your own privacy while you're in therapy. There are jobs posted on the wall..information about other things going on...Useful information, I liked that."

" I felt really wierd at the beginning, sitting on a hard chair and staring at the empty wall opposite, with office staff walking in and out of their offices"

An important Mook'am assumption is that sexual abuse victims need a sense of safety and comfort from their surroundings. In early planning, considerable attention was given to spacial, environmental, and material aspects of the program. As well, attention was given to creating an environment which is distinctively Native in aesthetics and utility.

This section summarizes client responses to the physical environment of Mook'am. This includes reactions to the general NCFST office space, since clients are exposed to this as they enter and await their appointments.

The general reaction to the over-all physical environment was positive, although there were some noteworthy critical comments. The positive reactions conveyed how people will respond differently. Some reactions are sensory and nothing else...smells, bodily comfort, physical relaxation. For others, the space and its contents produce a deeper psychological response, like memories of home or trust. Still others are helped, through visual cues, to structure their experience, and their expectations from the program.

Reactions to the general NCFST offices were favourable to mixed. Although appreciative of the proximity to transportation, some clients find the offices small, crowded and cluttered. One client, critical of the waiting room's proximity to the staff room, expressed discomfort at hearing her counsellor's voice. Another perceived "no place to sit and wait". Still another longed for a more bush-like environment.

Reactions to the separate Mook'am space was more uniformly positive and enthusiastic. People reacted to different items in space, all positively. Of interest is that different items provided program messages and helped the client know what to expect:

.the doll house and figurines meant that a son was going to helped

."Kleenex on te table told me they were not going to freak out if I cried"

For one, the ticking clock was an annoying reminder of passing time in therapy.

The signs and symbols of Native culture ... sweetgrass, pictures, magazines...all were noted and appreciated as a positive part of the Mook'am environment.

Reviewing the negatives, the dim lighting in the Mook'am area is not for everyone, although for some it produced the intended relaxation.

The Mook'm environment produces different response in terms of privacy and confidentiality. Those lacking a sense of privacy, spoke of the close proximity of interviewing rooms, and poor sound-proofing. Positive responses centered on the absence of interruptions or people walking through, and the locked door.

First Responses to the Program

"My problems are so big. How can this little place help me?"

Typically, new clients enter new personal development experiences with apprehension and fears. Successful programs find ways of acknowledging and normalizing these feelings.

Mook'am client comments suggest that some early apprehensions and negative feelings intermingled with their early experiences with the program...

.... having to wait for a worker, particularly during a crisis

.... bad experiences with previous therapy

.... fear of losing kids

.... possible staff response to client's loss of control

.... the doubts about being helped by a new program

.... how they will be involved in their child's therapy

How did clients react when they were first introduced to the program? With few exceptions, the early experiences produced positive, hopeful responses.

Some entered with positive "pre-program" attitudes and expectations, having been exposed to the program in a workshop or reading, or as a result of having heard favourable comments about the staff.

The initial positive responses resulted primarily from staff actions.

"Charlene's honesty and commitment won me over"

"Just call them up and they will understand what you are going through. They were not going to take your kid away. I was told that"

"My family worker is qualified. My concern was that people be qualified"

"I do recall that I felt safe and comfortable right away. I felt I found a place that I could do what I wanted to do. They gave me suggestions, for instance, they encouraged me to write and draw."

"They don't treat you like a client. They treat you like a person, and they don't make a big deal about you either."

"What I did like was when Charlene first started to burn the sage. Overall my first visit wasn't bad"

The responses to Mook'am's physical surroundings were almost as important in creating a sense of safety and relaxation.

Sustaining Hope and Commitment

Therapeutic and counselling programs are continually challenged to sustain client hopefulness and on-going participation in the program. Mortality rates are high in many programs, especially those dealing with sexual abuse.

"I felt I was going to get help. With those two there was a never-ending support, and the honesty...they didn't try to spare my feelings. They didn't fib. If [staff] cried and shared her feelings I felt good to have her feelings shared...They ask me first before they do something for me. They are up front with me"

Assuming that the anticipation of being helped is an important dynamic in sustaining commitment, Mook'am clients were asked whether, once they started, they felt that they would be helped by the program. As well, we asked whether these feelings changed throughout the program.

All six clients communicated a sense of optimism about being helped by the program. However, whereas three of these women were steadfast in this optimism, three admitted to wavering to the point of considering withdrawal. What insights can we glean from their comments?

First, their descriptions of what sustained their hopefulness emphasized such things as ...

- .their personal comfort in disclosing
- .the honesty of staff concerning the potential for change and their own expertise
- .staff sharing their own feelings
- .opportunities for involvement in decision-making
- .the sense of staff competence

It was clearly difficult for clients to reflect on when and why their hopefulness wavered, and why they considered dropping out. Isolated comments suggest that...

- .mood changes, such as depression, were taken as signs of potential failure in the program
- .some clients had lofty expectations of their counsellors

Those who wavered were remotivated through a process of reflecting about their problems, and concluding that program success was very much dependent on their personal efforts in their own healing.

This suggests that an important program feature is the capacity to overcome the client's dependency on the program, and engender an early sense of the importance of self-healing.

Client Participation in Healing Activities

In this section we examine client participation in the core healing activities of the program. The aim is to document their emotional responses, and learn from their interpretations of various events. This includes their involvements and responses to staff as helpers.

Participation in Core Program Activities

In principle, Mook'am clients are not required to participate in all core activities. Services are individualized depending on client needs and cultural inclinations.

This principle was reflected in the experiences of the six sample clients. Although all clients participated in one-to-one counselling, two of these had not participated in healing circles and four had not experienced a sweat lodge. Four clients received smudging.

Those who were uninvolved in traditional Native healing activities were either not Ojibway or were generally uninvolved in traditional Native culture. Even so, one person who had been raised in a white family and had found the healing circle a "culture shock", nevertheless attended the circle and participated in smudging. A Mohawk woman who had been raised in the Longhouse tradition chose not to participate in Ojibway-oriented traditions.

Other activities experienced by some, though not all, clients are reading self-help books, journal-keeping, camping, and letter-writing.

Participation in the Healing Circle

"I always find it hard to talk about myself. At the healing circle I can cry and I know what is going to happen. I sort of know that things are going to come out sooner or later. Sometimes this stops me from going, but I also know that it is part of healing so I keep going"

Healing circles are not mandatory for Mook'am clients. Two of the four women interviewed had not yet participated. As an explanation, one spoke of her different cultural background:

"I don't think I'm ready to go to these activities...All of these are from different teachings, although I know a little about them. We do not use them in the Longhouse where I go. All the activities are Ojibway and I don't know much about them...Our ceremonies are very different."

Another expressed discomfort with her Nativeness.

Client participation in the healing circle produced generally positive feelings towards the process, but not without some mixed

reactions. The negative responses were directed against the symbolism of the activities or the requirements to speak about oneself in front of others. For one client, the fear of openness was a significant factor in her spotty attendance.

The temporary discontinuation of the healing circle produced disappointment and confusion. One woman was very disappointed at the discontinuation of the circle, and sensed that clients may have been blamed for this. Her comments reflected anger and confusion over why the circle had been discontinued.

On the positive side, clients felt that, within the context of the circle, they were able to raise their personal issues. One said that specific issues were not necessarily resolved in the circle, but that she was generally helped in her

relationships with other people. Another said:

"I'm identifying feelings that I had hidden for so long. Now I'm totally different. I'm more assertive.

Yes, very much so. I've learned a lot. I've gained a lot of respect for myself and I've earned it. I'm not saying that I'm conceited"

Clients were asked to talk about those particularly helpful processes within the circle, and speculate on the reasons for their helpfulness. Their comments indicate how the format produced both common and unique experiences.

For most, sharing issues and problems within the circle produced a sense of trust, emotional release, and the comfort of not being alone with certain problems. References were also made to the concrete ideas and suggestions received for specific problems.

Two women drew attention to specific cultural activities, such as the singing of traditional songs and the passing of the feather. Interestingly, the feather was important to one woman who found particular comfort in knowing that she could talk for as long or as little as she wanted. And finally: "Hugging is always good!".

A unique feature of the healing circle is the participation of staff in the circle and sharing of their own issues. For one woman, this participation was helpful: "It helped me change my feelings about them". For another, knowing about their problems and issues made her temporarily "lose faith" in staff. Clearly, people have different responses to this aspect of the program.

I conclude this section with a lengthy quotation which is extremely reflective and powerful.

"The circle brought us together. Learning to trust with our own secrets, and trusting your secrets with others. This is the most significant part of healing. Knowing that others are experiencing too. Building the support system is good too. Being in the circle and showing the different parts of healing. Being supportive of people who are dealing with something that you have already dealt with. The effort that you put into the relationship makes it all worthwhile."

This quotation and other comments throughout all six interviews draws attention to an important element of the healing process. This has to do with the capacity and perhaps the joy of helping others. People are no longer passive objects for others, but are "subjects" who act upon and contribute to a reciprocal relationship. Perhaps this is what is meant by the "community of healers". It may be particularly important for sexual abuse victims.

Participation in Counselling

Every Mook'am client participates in a one-to-one counselling relationship with a staff member. Interviews surfaced strong and consistent positive response to counselling. This applies to both staff members.

The interviews also surfaced a number of conditions and processes which, for clients, were significant parts of counselling. On the positive side, three of the six clients mentioned the helpful and calming effects of cultural activities and materials, such as burning sweet-grass and sage. Others commented on..

.the lack of barriers or structure, which encouraged a recognition of being able to solve of one's own problems

.comfortable furniture

.counsellor's timely questions, friendliness, acceptance and "being on my side".

Several clients emphasized the usefulness of counselling in making a bridge to other healing program activities, such as the healing circle, writing, drawing, reading, and other support groups.

Clients were also asked to reflect on the uncomfortable aspects of counselling, and the things that sometimes made it difficult to participate. Some comments reflect the inevitable anxiety associated with the process of personal growth. Others may be related to cultural differences in the behaviors expected within a helping relationship.

Some talked about the difficulty of talking, particularly about their own problems, including taking the first steps towards independent problem-solving. Another talked about the difficulty of sustaining eye contact. Still another commented on the initial difficulty of trusting a non-Native counsellor. Finally, one person talked about her expectation for closer physical proximity to the counsellor and emotional comforting.

Interaction with Other Clients

Clients in the Mook'am program interact with others during the healing circle. At summer camp, they mix with women and children from Mook'am and other NCFST programs.

Three of the six people interviewed were acquainted with other program clients before starting the program. A positive indication of the quality of the relationships is that four women felt that they had made new friends during the program, people with whom they could share troublesome issues.

Most spoke positively about their involvements with the other women. They emphasized such processes as sharing, offering support, and knowing that others had similar problems.

One woman commented on how the different growth levels may sometimes inhibit stronger bonding with others.

Another client commented on what she saw as marked differences in her responses within the healing circle and at summer camp:

" I loved sharing in the healing circle. Camping was different. I found all my fears about people were there. I didn't know how to act. I stayed by myself or stayed with the children."

This comment raises important questions about the differences in organization and interaction in these two settings, and how these differences can be utilized for assessment and healing. The structure of camp likely brings people together in closer, more frequent interaction, which partly requires some completion of tasks. As well, those with children are publically involved in parenting their own, and possibly other children.

The healing circle in a sense minimizes two-way interaction, with focus on the leader or each client addressing the group as a whole. The camp setting has a broader scope of interactions with more people around various tasks. It appears that each setting calls forth different sets of personal resources, attitudes, and areas of self-esteem or doubt. (For other comments on this, see last section, entitled "Issues for Discussion").

More will be said on the roles of fellow clients in the section entitled "Program Impact".

Perceptions of Staff

Within healing programs generally, the interaction between clients and staff is an important vehicle for personal change. Research on the "helping process" has consistently shown that success derives from many factors, well beyond professional "techniques".

A number of specific questions were asked about the clients perceptions of staff and their own relationships with staff.

Over-all, the results were overwhelming positive in their tone and descriptions. The isolated critical comments were lost among the many statements of praise and respect. Critical comments were directed to the early stages of the staff-client relationship, and in most cases did not hold true as the relationship evolved.

Deatils are provided in the following sections.

Sense of Staff Competence

All six clients were **consistent and lavish in their perceptions of staff competence**. Each described competence in slightly different ways. The most frequently mentioned attributes creating a sense of competence were the classical qualities for a good helping relationship:

- .good listening skills
- .interpersonal perceptiveness and understanding (empathy)
- .skills for drawing out the client without seeming manipulative

Both staff members were seen as competent, yet as one client remarked, "they showed their individuality". Although interviews did not delve into the perceived competence of other staff, the Program Supervisor was seen as competent, particularly in her mediation skills.

Qualities of a Helping Relationship

Clients were asked a series of specific questions designed to tap the qualities of helping relationships. The results:

- .Most clients felt comfortable with staff
- .All but one felt the opportunity to raise and deal with their own issues
- .Everyone felt respected by staff
- .For the most part, all felt free to say and do anything without being judged or criticised.
- .Most felt that confidentiality was being respected

A few qualifying observations are noteworthy:

- (i)One client felt slightly uncomfortable upon first realizing that Charlene was not Native. However, this discomfort quickly dissipated as the relationship grew and the client began to appreciate Charlene's qualities.
- (ii)Non-core members of the program received mixed reviews. One client felt uncomfortable with both male NCFSTR staff during support services. Another was quite critical of the woman organizing the fast. Others were critical of the camp organizer. An exception to this were very positive statements made about the intake worker and the receptionist.
- (iii)For some, the early phase of counselling was most difficult. For example, in the beginning it was difficult to talk freely, and address issues of most concern.
- (iv)One person, when discussing confidentiality, mentioned her apprehension concerning the camping experience.
- (v)The physical aspects of the helping relationship was mentioned by four clients. Eye contact was difficult and uncomfortable. Physical closeness in the counselling room was valued. Timely hugging was welcomed. Staff's physical expression of feelings were noted and were beneficial to the relationship.

A Profile of Valued Healing Responses

During the course of each interview, clients made a number of evaluative comments which provided insight to important qualities of staff and the helping relationship. Clients were also asked about what would constitute ideal staff in a program such as Mook'am.

The patterns in these comments are useful for understanding client's expectations and their sense of contributes to the healing process.

Valued staff and helping qualities may be summarized as follows:

.Staff who enjoys their job and loves to help

.Honesty in the expressions of feelings and opinions, limitations of skills, and perceptions of the client.

.A counselling pace which is unhurried and patient.

.Non-judgemental and accepting responses.

.A sense of safety and trust, particularly about losing the children.

.Staff willingness to share their own personal issues.

.Staff who have worked on their own issues

.A relationship which encourages the expression of affect, both positive and negative feelings

.A relationship which is broad in scope such that clients feel that they and the staff are relating as total persons, rather than staff and clients ("to be a friend ...available").

.Empathy and sensitivity

.Warmth and kindness

.A sense of staff skill

.An elder on staff

Program Impact

Technically, this phase of the evaluation project was not designed to assess the specific effects of the program on clients. This is planned for 1992. However, some attention was given to an exploration of the personal effects perceived by clients, without specifically measuring the various kinds of changes anticipated by the program. In effect, this section discusses the clients' "sense of change" emanating from various program experiences.

In this section I assume that the language used by clients to describe their own personal changes is a "window" to their various healing selves. For this reason, this language is retained throughout the section.

The Impact of Counselling

All clients sensed that the counselling process made them think differently about themselves. The descriptive language clearly indicates that the differences were positive and highly valued by each person.

Some expressed their changes abstractly and metaphorically:

" I just blossomed. I could compare it to a seed being frozen...and gradually thawing out and feeling."

Most were quite specific in their language of personal change:

" I thought of myself as a better person. I found out I wasn't bad. I don't let people walk all over me, not any more."

" I think about myself differently. I know now that I'm a deserving human being. I can really see myself in a positive light. More self-esteem."

" Only eight months of therapy. I've come a long way. This kind of counselling is not a kind of dependency. Its helping me solve my own problems. Talking it out, talking it all out. Coming to a conclusion myself."

" Yes.[The counselling made me think of myself differently]. At first, I felt really helpless."

Clients were also asked if, and how, counselling may have made a difference to how they lead their life. All agreed that it did, but in different ways. Those with family felt better able to parent or relate to their partners. Others spoke of a growing independence in their behavior, such as problem solving, having an "inner strength" and natural creativity, and the ability to speak up for herself. Still others spoke of being able to change harmful behavior (eg. alcohol, drugs) and relationships.

The impact of healing circles

"Learning about Native things helped me identify myself...Get in touch with myself"

All four participating clients, expressed a clear sense that healing circles made a difference, either in the ways they lead their lives or think of themselves. How do clients express this sense of change?

Depending on who speaks, their words are highly abstract or indeed indicative of specific and concrete experiences or behaviors. Three themes emerge from comments about how they think of themselves differently. Again, client words and phrases are used to convey these themes:

.becoming "unblocked" or "soft inside" in the sense of getting in touch with feelings.

.self respect

.being able, and wanting to share feelings

This last distinction between "being able" and "wanting" to share feelings is important. Each represents a slightly different component of self. One conveys a sense of a new capacity, the other a sense of the desirability of a new way of relating.

Clients were also asked if, in their opinion, the experience of the healing circles helped them make some changes in the

way they were living their lives. All four said yes.

" They changed my life. I was flying high when I came out. Brought a lot more out of my life.
Learned how I missed my own culture."

In addition to changes in cultural involvement, clients talked about new...

.inner changes: "getting softer"

.assertiveness

.abilities to talk and not take things for granted

.ways of taking care of oneself

The impact of relationships with other clients

Two of the four clients who had involvements with other clients felt that these relationships helped to make changes in the way they think of themselves, as well as how they lead their lives.

Clients developed a fresh sense of their own abilities to support and help others. As well, they became more aware of their negative feelings and attitudes towards themselves, and how these inhibit relating to others.

Comments also highlight growing capacities for assertiveness, recognizing strengths and weaknesses in others, avoiding judgements, and relating to the feelings of others.

For some, interaction with others produced new self-insights and an emerging curiosity about life. One talked of learning about personal fears and "running and hiding" in the presence of others. Yet another spoke of her desire to...

"...learn about life: human behavior, concrete houses versus life at the reserve understanding all things around me."

Still another spoke of "building relationships that matter" and associating with people who care.

Changes in other family members

Those with other family members in the program spoke optimistically about positive changes in family behavior, and the positive implications for them personally.

" Yes. He is much easier to deal with, talk to. He's a better person. Isn't drinking any more. Much happier with himself. I can talk to him much easier now."

Those with children conveyed a sense of being better parents, but not without some struggle:

" I'm more concerned for him now. Recognizing his changes. I'm a better parent now. He was unhappy after one particular session. Sometimes he's protective of me."

"Yes [there were changes resulting from the program]. More acting out. My oldest daughter is physically abusive to me. I had to really take the time to sit and listen to her. I have to be more self-disciplined in disciplining her."

Those with husbands or boyfriends talked about sharing the problem-solving and better communications.

Descriptions of self... then and now

To glean an overall sense of Mook'am's contribution to personal change, each client was asked two questions towards the end of the interview:

Think back to when you first started in the Mook'am program, what words would you use to describe yourself at that point?

What words would you use to describe yourself now?

The answers are reproduced in detail on the following page.

When I first started the program

"I was making a step to get my family life together and better.

"I was still drinking. Its like I was a child. I grew up more now in this program than I have in the past with other programs. I'm drug-free now. I've totally cut off those people..."

"I was a mess, angry, confused, disoriented, disillusioned, and plain fed-up."

"Desperate. Helpless"

"A bratty little teen-ager who thought she knew everything. That was two years ago.."

"Frozen, stunted creatively. Extremely terrified. Determined to find a way out of this. Very ill.

The over-all pattern is clear. Each and every client indeed expresses a sense of change since beginning the program. Maturity, healthiness, trust, in touch with feelings....these, and other themes prevail as clients compare then and now.

To be sure, very little new information is added to experiences reported earlier in this report. The value of this data is one of verification and summary.

Now, I am....

"Still in the process of doing that, and am further ahead in the process of doing that."

"More aware, mature, more conscious about my problem. I'm functional now. I'm trusting, more assertive, and a better parent. The inner me is more accepting of stuff, accepting my physical me because my adoptive parents used to use it against me."

"I feel good about myself. I am actually going to be me. I am starting to like me."

"I'm hopeful. There's hope...Feeling more self confident at this stage."

"More mature. It took a long time. I'm happier now."

"Struggling. Not as terrified. I'm feeling now...learning to identify my feelings. Convalescing."

Clients Recommend Program Change

The thrust of these program experiences is one of movement. By and large, the program provides, and is seen to

provide, opportunities for clients to experience novelty. They experience new messages, think about (and offer) themselves in new ways, and act rather than being acted upon.

Humanistic research must also provide these opportunities. To this end, our interviews treated clients as experts with valuable knowledge for program growth. To do otherwise risks unnecessary discordance between self-experience in two realms. Like the program, we said "your experience counts!".

At several points throughout the interview, clients were essentially asked: "how could things be done differently... and better?"

Most recommendations were idiosyncratic in the sense that each client made a different set of recommendations. Recommendations covered several areas of the program: techniques, organizational features, physical environment, programs and services.

Three recommendations were mentioned by three people. These were:

Improvements in the summer camp: better organized, better food, and more healing circles.

Outreach to the Native community: hot-line; community education about the program;

Increase in counselling staff

The next three recommendations were mentioned by two persons each:

More frequent healing circles

Elders

Modifications in physical facilities: larger rooms, natural light, wheelchair accessibility, and a room apart from staff for client (cigarette) breaks.

Finally, the remaining ideas were offered by one individual each:

.healing circles for children

.better planning of in-home program

.healthier food at Xmas party

.long term care program

.art therapy for adults who find it difficult to talk about problems

.more opportunities for fasting

.counselling techniques for releasing rage

Issues for Discussion

1. Would those choosing not to participate in healing circles benefit from another kind of group experience? Client data highlights the benefits of the group process within the healing circle.
2. What proportion of clients are Mohawk or some other culture? How can they benefit from Native healing? Are there generic healing activities suitable for all cultures?
3. What are the anticipated therapeutic benefits of summer camp?
Could these be identified and added to the description of the model?
4. Stresses were noted as Mook'am clients came into contact with personnel and program activities which are outside of the program core. How is Mook'am helped to interface with the agency at large and other programs?