

## Introduction

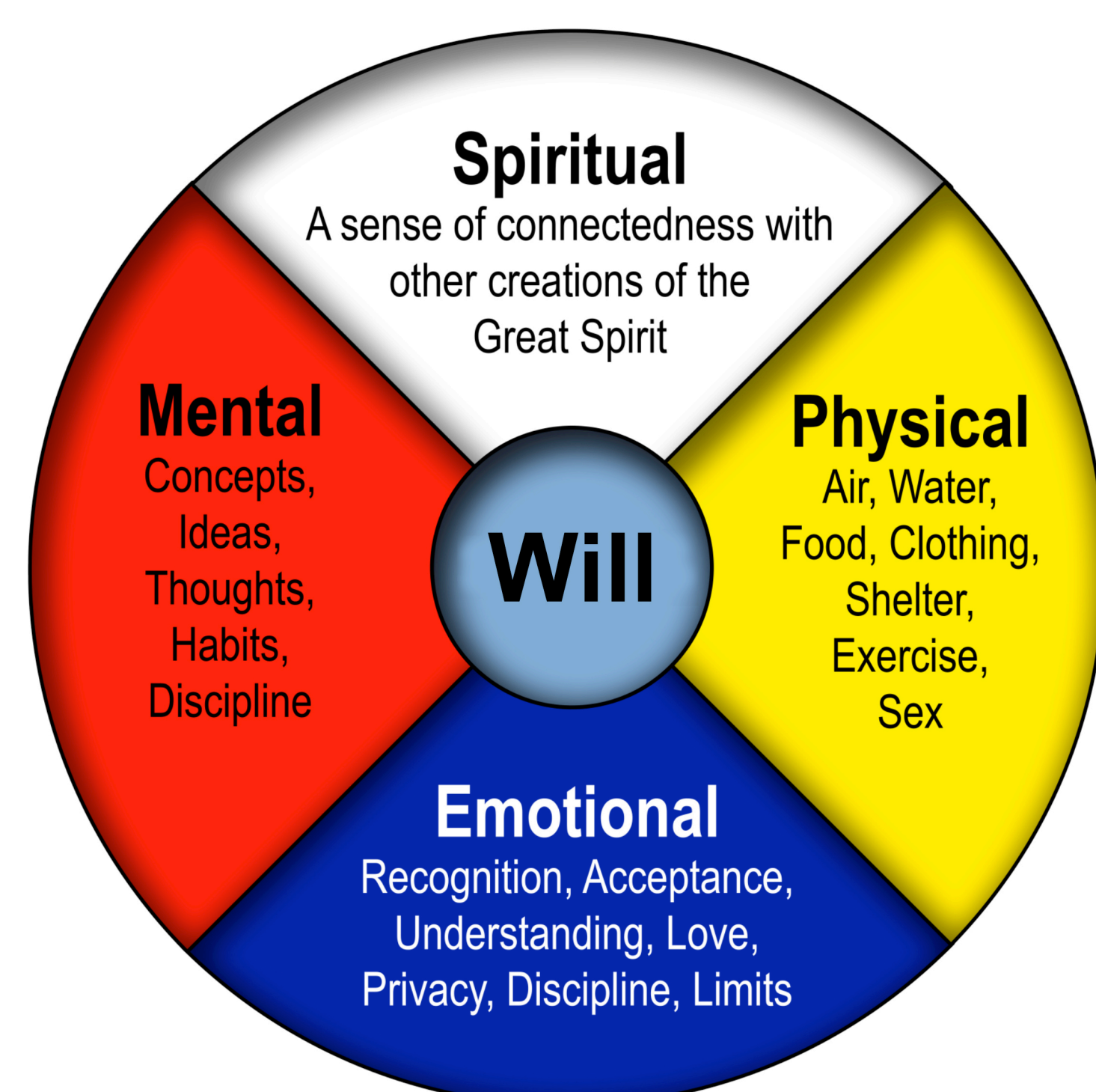
By “all measurements of the human condition, Indigenous people lead in the statistics of suicide, alcoholism, family breakdown, substance abuse...they serve as direct indicators of the serious stress connected with being an Indigenous person in today’s world” <1>. While this statement was made in 1986, it remains true today. Indigenous health and well-being has been recognized as a national concern in Canada <2>. These health disparities contribute to increased costs to the health care system and impact quality of life for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

## Objectives

The specific objectives of this three year project are to: develop, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of a community-based plan to address health and well-being; and, evaluate the relationship between the collaborative development of the plan and the empowerment of the Plains Cree people (néhiyawak) from Thunderchild First Nation. This research project will build on previous work done by the primary investigator with the Thunderchild First Nation with the addition of the voices of the Elders and youth.



## Methodology



The medicine wheel, an Indigenous paradigm/model that embraces a holistic approach to health and well-being, will provide the conceptual framework for this project. This study will use action research and participatory processes <3> to guide the research process and relationship with the community. Interviews will be conducted with youth and Elders, guided by narrative inquiry <4>. Data analysis will be conducted according to the principles of thematic narrative analysis <5>. Defining and measuring success of the community-based plan will be a collaborative endeavor with the community using Arnstein’s Ladder <6> as the frame; as well as, Rissel’s Model of Community Empowerment <7> which links personal and community empowerment with collective action. By collaboratively developing, implementing, and evaluating a community-based program with the Plains Cree people of the Thunderchild First Nation, the researchers hope to add to evidence-informed strategies and processes that facilitates empowerment in and with First Nation communities.

## Primary Investigator’s Previous Work

Dr. Holly Graham-Marrs explored mental health and well-being for her doctoral research in the Thunderchild First Nation. The findings from that study will provide the foundation, with the addition of the voices of the Elders and youth to develop this community-based plan. The néhiyawak described the following as necessary for their mental health and well-being:

### Relationships

- Met their emotional needs
- Increased self awareness
- Provided opportunity for personal growth
- Gave the néhiyawak hope

### Spiritual Beliefs & Cultural Practices

- Spirituality and prayer
- Ceremony

### Tānīsī wāpahtaman pimātisiwin

(worldview)

- Personal responsibility
- néhiyawak attitude
- wícihisowin (helping oneself)

### Physical Needs

- Employment; having a home; safe environment;
- being able to buy sufficient nutritious food; being able to manage their chronic conditions, and exercising on a regular basis.

## References

- 1 Antone, R. A., Hill, D. L. & Meyers, B. A. (1986). *The power within people*. Brantford, ON: Hurry Print.
- 2 Health Canada (2005). *Closing the gaps in Aboriginal health*. Retrieved from <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/sr-sr/pubs/hpr-rpms/bull/2003-5-aboriginal-autochtone/intro-eng.php>.
- 3 Ramsden, V. R., & Cave, A. J. (2002). Participatory methods to facilitate research. *Canadian Family Physician*, 48, 548-549.
- 4 Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in Qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- 5 Reissman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- 6 Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A Ladder of Citizen Participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35 (4), 216-222.
- 7 Rissel, C. (1994). Empowerment: The holy grail of health promotion? *Health Promotion International*, 9(1), 39-47.



## Acknowledgements

- Graphic Design - Chris Boychuk
- Medicine Wheel reprinted with permission from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF)
- Photographs of male dancers provided by the University of Saskatchewan

## Contact

Dr. Holly Graham-Marrs  
Email: [holly.graham@usask.ca](mailto:holly.graham@usask.ca)

Dr. Peter Butt  
Email: [peter.butt@usask.ca](mailto:peter.butt@usask.ca)

Dr. Vivian R. Ramsden  
Email: [viv.ramsden@usask.ca](mailto:viv.ramsden@usask.ca)



Dr. Holly Graham-Marrs