

Revisiting the Legacy of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples:
A Rhetorical Analysis of Healing

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ABSTRACT

Revisiting the Legacy of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: A Rhetorical Analysis of Healing

Alexa Conradi

This thesis offers a re-reading of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) designed to bring reconciliation to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations in Canada. Most critics argue that the RCAP failed to address a radical critique of the colonial relations between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Canadians or that its conclusions were largely ignored. Instead, this thesis shows that these conclusions need to be revisited. Using rhetorical analysis of the Commission's work, I discuss how the RCAP fostered a process by which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians could generate change.

This thesis argues that the Commission adopted the language of healing as a way to frame discussions regarding the past, present and future situation of Aboriginal people and their relations with the Canadian government. I show that the RCAP had three functions. First, shaped by Aboriginal people's presentations, the hearings turned into a ritual of transformation, a rhetorical process of empowerment that strengthened Aboriginal discourse communities and revalorised Aboriginal traditional knowledge. Second, the entire process centred on the metaphor of healing as an unthreatening way to engage non-Aboriginal Canadians in a dialogue with Aboriginal peoples. Third, healing as defined by Aboriginal people stood as a radical alternative to Euro-Canadian epistemology as the (sole) philosophy with which to redefine the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada.

As such, the RCAP should be understood as a significant, critical and positive contribution to shifts in the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada. These shifts may foster the reconciliation process.

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Chapter 1: The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Was it about Reconciliation or Healing?

Inspired by the negotiated end to Apartheid in South Africa, many countries are embracing the reconciliation process in order to come to terms with legacies of violent conflict including gross human rights violations and civil war (Doxtader, 2003). As a concept that carries with it the commitment to repair social and political relationships fraught with pain and injustice, the reconciliation process offers the grounds on which people may engage in discussion about the polity they seek to (re)constitute.

Reconciliation is a process that welcomes the expression of (dis)agreement by former enemies with the hope of coming to a degree of mutual understanding (Doxtader, 2003).

At its best, reconciliation can constitute the very conditions in which a democracy can flourish, ones that foster the move from violent conflict towards the world of words.

In Canada reconciliation became a theme of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples designed to deal with the difficult historical relationship between Canada and Aboriginal peoples. The commission of inquiry was instituted following a series of conflicts between governments and a number of First Nations people. In particular, action became inevitable after a summer-long armed clash between a Mohawk community, the police and a number of residents of Oka (Quebec) over the construction of a golf course on traditional Mohawk burial land in 1990. Aboriginal peoples in Canada were becoming increasingly impatient about the conditions of their lives and the lack of advancement on the issues they felt were important: land claims, self-government, social problems. As the Oka crisis, as it became known, came to an end, the Canadian government decided to address the legacy of colonialism and the conditions of existence of Aboriginal peoples.

Indeed, the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the colonial (Great Britain, France) and eventually the Canadian governments has been and continues to be fraught with difficulties. Notably, the Canadian government adopted in 1876 the *Indian Act*, making Aboriginal peoples wards of the state. Then Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald wrote “The great aim of our civilization has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the inhabitants of the Dominion, as speedily as they are fit for the change” (in Smye, 2004: 26). Assimilation was the goal for it was seen as a way of uplifting less sophisticated people into the mainstream society. The impact of assimilationist policies however would be found at once devastating on Aboriginal communities but also completely ineffectual for Aboriginal peoples in Canada continue to exist and to claim an Aboriginal identity (RCAP, 1996).

The *Indian Act* specified who would and would not be recognised by the Canadian government as “Indians.” For example, Aboriginal women who married non-Aboriginal men were denied their Indian status, giving them the same status as all other Canadians (Smye, 2004: 27). The Act also outlawed ceremonies, such as the potlatch, central to the organisation of the cultural life of the community. Furthermore, the *Act* gave the government control over health, welfare, taxes, hunting and fishing rights, political structures of the community all formerly under the control of Aboriginal communities (ibid: 26). To a large extent, controls over the development and management of Aboriginal people’s lives were displaced into the hands of the Canadian government. Aboriginal peoples were relegated to reserves and territories, limiting their access to land and resources and therefore to economic development.

In addition, with government support, Christian churches set up residential schools to which Aboriginal youth were sent or forced in order to ensure the acculturation process (McCabe, 2004: 27). Residential schools divided families to the extent that some children lived away from their communities beginning at the age of five or six. For many adults that lived in residential schools loving and caring for family members was and continues to be fraught with difficulty; having never been parented, some never learned how to parent. Cultural loss often characterised the lives of those attending residential schools because their language and customs were either outlawed or simply ignored (Plouffe, 2002: 15-18). The purpose of these schools was to prepare Aboriginal children to integrate into Canadian society. For some, this schooling offered opportunities that would otherwise have been impossible in the reserve (Smye, 2004: 35). Yet for many, the experience was marred by sexual and physical abuse. The devastating effects of residential schools were found by the RCAP to be one of the most shameful aspects of the colonial legacy (RCAP, 1996).

The effects of this colonial process have been widely documented. McCabe writes that “Acculturation and loss of identity caused a serious decline in the mental and physical wellness of Aboriginal peoples” (McCabe, 2004: 26). In sociological terms, the effects of acculturation may be seen in the living conditions of many Aboriginal peoples. Poverty and unemployment remain much higher in Aboriginal communities than in non-Aboriginal communities of Canada. Suicide, family and gender-based sexual and physical abuse are widespread (Regnier, 1994: 135). The criminalisation and incarceration of Aboriginal peoples far exceeds their proportional percentage of their population in relation to other Canadians (Jaccoud, 1995: 94). High levels of drug and

alcohol abuse act as signs of a deeper kind of distress. Housing shortages, due in part to the lack of available land on reserves, creates social tensions and displacement of women and youth towards urban centres (ibid).

In the face of growing activism by Aboriginal peoples and the public's concern about the human rights and living conditions of Aboriginal peoples, the Conservative government, led by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, passed legislation making way for a commission of inquiry into the relationship between Aboriginal peoples, the government and Canadian society (RCAP, 1991). It was to be a wide-ranging investigation into the problems faced by Aboriginal communities (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) but more importantly into possible economic, legal, educational, social, cultural solutions. Commissioners were both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal and their mandate was to take them to more than one hundred Aboriginal communities in Canada for hearings. After hearing from over two thousand people over a four-year process, in 1996, the Commission tabled a four thousand page report with hundreds of recommendations for Canadian and provincial governments (RCAP, 1996).

From the outset, the idea of reconciliation was outlined in the documents defining the mandate of the inquiry. The mandate stated that "the Commission make recommendations promoting reconciliation between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian society as a whole" (RCAP, 1991, Schedule 1: 1). The co-chairs in their opening statement spoke of the goals of the commission:

Despite the greatest of odds, over the past century Aboriginal Peoples have survived policies of paternalism, suppression, evasion and indifference. These policies have created an enormous gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal

people in this country; a gap that must be bridged by both groups, working together.

This hearing – and the many others that will follow – will help bridge that gap. They will contribute to the reconciliation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people; a reconciliation that must occur if Canadians are to build a new relationship between First Peoples and those who have joined them in this land. A relationship based on partnership, trust, sensitivity and respect; one that will form the basis for a stronger, brighter and more honourable future for Aboriginal Peoples and for all Canadians (RCAP, 1992: 11).

The Commissioners suggest that a new relationship based on partnership and respect must replace the old relationship based on paternalism and indifference. The participation of Canadians, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, in the work of the Commission will contribute to reconciliation seen as a re-building of a bridge between the two groups.

What does reconciliation imply? If we look to the South African experience we discover that the backdrop of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) included a negotiated settlement between political parties making way for a non-racial democracy and the adoption of a transitional constitution after years of violence. The TRC was given the status of a sovereign court, not the more limited status of a parliamentary commission. The goal was reconciliation and healing through truth finding, amnesty provisions and reparations (Cassin et al, 2004: 22). Institutional actors such as political parties, public administrators, and actors of the justice system, religious organisations and the media and members of the general public would testify (ibid, 23). The goal of hearing from the victims' perspective was healing and reparation through

storytelling of what was known but untold (Salazar, 2004: 61). The perpetrators were called to account for their actions. The combination of victim testimony and perpetrator accounting served to foster trust that would make reconciliation possible (ibid). Inspired by principles of restorative justice where the criminal takes a step toward the victim who in turn welcomes the *mal*¹, healing is brought to bear (ibid). In Salazar's words: « Chaque *account* par un criminel, chaque *storytelling* par une victime, chaque *statement* par un corps constitué ou un organe civil est un instant critique où se joue la réconciliation même. » (ibid: 80). If one follows the South African experience, a process of reconciliation requires participation in hearings by people from formerly adversarial groups, admission of wrong-doing by the violators of human rights abuses, public recognition of guilt by those who request amnesty for their crimes of a political nature and the recounting of stories by the victims of human rights abuses.

The goal of reconciliation is neither forgiveness nor absolute agreement: “Far less than redemption, reconciliation interrupts the historical justifications for endless conflict in the name of fostering argumentation that affords enemies with an occasion to begin the task of debating how to best make history” (Doxtader, 2004: 389). Reconciliation makes it possible to agree to disagree, to build upon common values and even to begin the construction of a sense of shared existence. Justice could only emerge in a context in which all people could participate in the reconstruction of the moral order (Charland, 2004: 207). The central goal of the commission's work “est bel et bien que c'est le corps social dans son ensemble qu'il s'agit de guérir” (Cassin et al, 2004 : 19). It was time to heal the social body.

¹ The word *mal* is hard to translate into one word because it refers to “evil, ill, wrong; harm, hurt, mischief; pain, ache, sore, sickness, ailment; hardship, inconvenience; misfortune; trouble, difficulty, toil; dislike; repugnance.” (Casell's French-English English-French Dictionary, 1957, p. 452)

Erik Doxtader, a scholar of rhetoric and reconciliation, argues that it is not because a mandate of reconciliation has been developed by a commission that reconciliation will occur (2004). He suggests that all parties must experience a “shared negativity” in the status quo (albeit in varying degrees between the perpetrators and the victims) in order for reconciliation to function (Doxtader, 2004: 382). In South Africa, the entire society was suffering from the level of violence and muffled warfare between the white supremacist state and blacks. The commitment to change arose because people were more and more conscious that the status quo could lead to a blood bath.

In the Canadian context, it is relevant to wonder whether the conditions of the inquiry fulfilled the requirements of a reconciliation process. In some respects, the Commission’s work was similar. The Commissioners led by George Erasmus and René Dussault strove to undertake a fact finding mission, to reconstruct Canadian history to include the experiences of Aboriginal peoples, to tell the untold stories (RCAP, 1992). The hearings made it possible for Aboriginal people to tell their stories of abuse and suffering. The narrative form became an important mode of communication albeit not the central one. The Commission was provided with a larger budget than most, the total of which amounted to fifty-five million dollars (McGill Reporter, 1997). Its mandate was wide-reaching and touched on most areas of Aboriginal lives: health, education, self-government, treaties, land claims, economic development and justice issues.

Despite these similarities, the context in which this Commission evolved was ultimately very different from that of South Africa. Although the living conditions of many Aboriginal communities was and is sub-standard and the political status of Aboriginal peoples deemed unsatisfactory by many, the Commission took place in a

context where gross human rights violations were problems of the past, not the present. Unlike in South Africa, the Canadian constitution does not outline separate citizenship statuses for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples (but does make distinctions of status among Aboriginals). Despite occasional civil unrest, no on-going campaign of civil disobedience or armed conflict characterized the years preceding the Commission. No criminals were identified as perpetrators, nor did anyone claim amnesty. While constitutional discussions regarding the status of Quebec and Aboriginal people were underway in Canada, the process did not imply the idea of re-constituting a legal, moral state. Canada already considered itself to be a moral, legal state; it therefore did not need to re-establish its moral legitimacy in the international arena. Political parties, either in power or not, did not feel compelled to negotiate an end to violent conflict with Aboriginal peoples. Nevertheless, the Canadian government did recognise the need for reconciliation.

Was there a shared negativity that would make reconciliation possible? I argue, no. The conditions for reconciliation and its incumbent requirement of “shared negativity” were not sufficiently present to transform the RCAP into a reconciliation process. Even if the government engaged with the language of reconciliation in reaction to the report (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1996), nothing suggests that Canadians engaged in a process of reconciliation like in South Africa. In fact, it is reasonable to wonder to what extent Canadians actually followed and participated in the work of the RCAP. Of the approximately 1300 organisations that participated, about 200 were groups representing mostly non-Aboriginal people. While the Commission’s work was largely publicised during the period of the hearings and following the report, the

issues quickly faded from public view (Hurley and Wherrett, 1999). But the Commission did capture the imagination of Aboriginal peoples who participated in large numbers (Frideres, 1996). Critics suggest that few of the recommendations of the report have actually been adopted by succeeding governments (Steinhauer, 1997; Brecher, 1997; Gordon, 2004; Wagamese, 2001). My sense is that non-Aboriginal Canadians never felt sufficiently implicated in the RCAP to constitute a process of reconciliation of a similar force to that of South Africa.

Healing, not Reconciliation

The report nevertheless marks an important shift in the history of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations. Instead of reconciliation, it was the language of healing that was brought to the fore through the four-year long process. If the Commission and Aboriginal people did not massively adopt the language of reconciliation and instead chose the term ‘healing’ as its central metaphor, it is likely that the latter term better suited the socio-political circumstances of the Commission. This might explain why the language of reconciliation gave way to one regarding the renewal of the relationship among Aboriginal peoples and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. Apart from a few instances where reconciliation is evoked,² the report virtually dropped the term reconciliation. Instead, it is the trope of healing that figures prominently in the portrayal of the renewed relationship. This is symbolised by the logo of the Commission.

² In the final report of the RCAP, reconciliation is mentioned seventy-eight times, while during the consultation process, reconciliation is mentioned on three hundred and seventy-four occasions. In contrast, the term healing which becomes one of the central tropes of the commission’s work, is deployed five hundred and seventeen times in the final report and two thousand two hundred and twenty-six times in the consultative process (Seven Generations CD). While the quantification of usage does not translate the depth or level of importance of this usage, it is nevertheless interesting to note how the term healing overshadowed the other.

The logo of the RCAP captures the new relationship that the Commission sought to define:

[The bear's claw] represents the healing that must take place during [the inquiry] process. After so much misunderstanding, anger, alienation and division, the time has come to repair the fractures in relations between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian society. This healing will occur when the various components that make up Canadian society come together to embrace and affirm the fundamental principles that promote balanced and mutually beneficial co-existence" (RCAP, 1996, vol. 1: 676).

For the Commissioners, the relationship to be developed should be grounded on the principles of "mutual recognition, mutual respect, sharing and mutual responsibility." It is a process that involves recognition of treaty rights, the need and right for self-determination that Aboriginal peoples and Canadians co-exist on the basis of equality (ibid: 678). Respect implies honouring the earth and all its inhabitants; it also calls for the respect in the public sphere of differences in ways of viewing the world (ibid: 682-683). Sharing refers to the "giving and receiving of benefits" that befalls all people living in Canada, including economic cooperation. An emphasis here is placed on greater access to ancestral lands (ibid: 685-688). Finally, mutual responsibility implies that Aboriginal peoples and Canadians share a responsibility for the health of the land and resources and each other's well-being (ibid: 689). It means "the transformation of the colonial relationship of guardian and ward into one of true partnership." (ibid: 689). It is in this global framework that the Commission develops the idea of healing the relationship between Aboriginal peoples, the Canadian government and Canadian society.

Beyond the Commissioners' vision regarding healing, the idea simply permeated much of the Commission's work and has continued to hold rhetorical currency in much of the mainstream media and in Aboriginal communities. The language of healing includes terms such as balance, harmony, interconnectedness, traditional medicine, wholeness and holistic health, etc. This language may be found in the various Commission reports, in the consultative process and in government documents. It has been mobilised by activists, academics and politicians alike. Since the publication of the report, one of the most prominent and well-known recommendations of the Commission was adopted by the government: to set up a national healing foundation whose mandate is to offer community based programs that provide services designed to heal residential school survivors' experience of sexual and physical abuse. In light of this program, thousands of healing services have come into effect (Healing Foundation). While it does not find its origins in the RCAP, the idea of healing has certainly become a mainstay of public debate over Aboriginal issues. The focus of this thesis will be on the rhetoric of healing. What did this language express and make possible? What were the motivations and orientations embedded in this rhetorical choice?

The Rhetoric of Healing

Why focus so intensely on the word healing itself? Healing is a term that defies easy definition; it appears to refer at once to a concern for health and wellness to issues of cultural and spiritual recovery and even a renewed relationship between Canadians and Aboriginal peoples. I argue that the metaphor takes on the role of what Michael McGee named an 'ideograph', a term that is evoked by various advocates in order to achieve a particular purpose. An ideograph contains an "ideological commitment" and acts as "an

agent of political consciousness” (McGee, 1980a: 7). McGee defines the ideograph as “an ordinary language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal” (ibid: 15). The Royal Commission report deploys the trope of healing within a project of reconstituting the Canadian polity, one that would redefine the relationship of Aboriginal peoples to the Canadian state and of Canadian society to Aboriginal peoples. As such, the term is deployed with a particular purpose by different advocates, a purpose that carries “ideological commitments.” Political communities develop ideographs that are relevant to their reality. It would be difficult to qualify healing as an ideograph for Canadians in general, but healing does represent a vision with which no one can disagree. And for Aboriginal peoples, healing functions as a mobilising term and may qualify as an ideograph.

Much like Condit and Lucaites’s book on the influence of both Anglo and African American advocates in the evolution of the usage of term equality in the United States (1993), I will investigate how the multiple usages compare and contrast and ultimately construct the public meaning and scope of the term healing. This is why a rhetorical analysis of the discourse of the commission and its participants is an appropriate tool to discuss these commitments. I am interested in how this ideograph is figured and for what purposes. What is the meaning of healing as figured by those participating in the Commission? What does the report mean by healing and for what rhetorical purposes is it invoked? What does it mean that healing and not reconciliation became the central trope of the inquiry process? What in fact does the turn to a rhetoric of healing make possible and foreclose?

How to come to terms with the history of Canadian and Aboriginal relations and present conditions of Aboriginal peoples has become a matter of public moral argument. A public moral argument implies an issue that cannot be resolved by engaging solely with expert knowledge (Fisher, 1984: 12). It requires deliberation by members of the public. The public nature of this communicative process makes it relevant to study from a rhetorical perspective wherein rhetoric is the art of contingent and contextualised public communication designed to persuade. Aristotle called rhetoric “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion” (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book 1, Ch. 2) while Burke argued that rhetoric fosters identification (Burke, 1995). Rhetoric works best when the question does not involve a yes or no answer but requires reflection, not technical knowledge, over what should we do in a given situation. In this case, the inquiry raises the following types of questions to which rhetoric is required. What are the problems in the relationship between Canada, Canadians and Aboriginal peoples? What caused the problems? Who is responsible? What are the solutions? Who should decide? These are all questions that cannot be resolved through simple notions of correct or incorrect answers. In such instances, the turn to argumentation and identification is essential. The questions raised above must be debated; they are subject to rhetorical advocacy by individuals and groups of various strengths and rhetorical skills. In such instances, rhetorical scholars argue, people turn to myth, narration, metaphor and other figures of speech as well as to logical proofs to make their case (Fisher, McGee, Burke). In this context, public debate over moral issues includes emotions, logic, character and style, the repertoire to which rhetorical criticism is best applied.

In 1947, Ernest J. Wraga argued for a shift in the study of public address. He questioned the intellectual relevance of studying the form and content of great speeches as had been the American tradition before him. Instead, he suggested that rhetoricians engage in the study of ideas as presented not simply in the public address of great leaders but also as expressed in more popular media such as pamphlets and church orations (Wraga, 1947). In this way the study of public address could contribute to the study of the history of thought by gaining insight into the meaning of terms as used by the general public. He offered a democratised vision of the evolution of ideas, one that recognised that ideas are not the sole domain of great leaders but function within the realm of ordinary deliberation. Similarly, Michael McGee (1980b) in his work on the origins of liberty, demonstrate how in fact ideas are named by influential people in the public domain but that the location of the discovery is in the words and actions of the people. He wrote that ideas derive not from intellectual elites but “from the common sensation and experience of conditions which present themselves equally to all humanity” (McGee, 1980b: 24). He goes on to discuss the idea that liberty has no formal meaning but that it finds meaning as a spirit that is constituted in the citizenry through usages. As the term healing circulates among different parts of the population, it acquires different meanings that get taken up by governing groups.

Drawing on this perspective, this thesis will examine the deployment of the word ‘healing’ by participants in the RCAP. I will show that the hearings themselves turned into what Thomas Csordas calls a healing ritual, achieved through a rhetoric of transformation. In so doing, the more than two thousand submissions, leaders of organisations and members of the general public participated in the construction of the

meaning of healing as presented by the final report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Inevitably tensions may be found in the varying usages that will only serve to provide a sophisticated understanding of healing.

The RCAP provided a forum for making public statements about the problems and solutions facing Aboriginal peoples in Canada. While some participants will deploy a way of arguing grounded in rationality where expert knowledge is presented in a particular logical construct (Fisher, 1984: 4), others will contribute to the discussion in symbolic ways through storytelling. Healing itself is used within a context, a context of the historical relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian society and government. This tends to be recounted in the form of narrative. The narrative acts as an organising device of history, that also tends to direct the desired sequence of events. Ultimately, it is a highly democratic project to which Fisher appeals for it shifts the responsibility for and participation in deliberation over moral issues, or discussions of “what ought to be” to a realm in which non-experts, ordinary citizens may contribute (Fisher, 1984:12). Fisher’s work calls upon the critic to examine the broader story in which healing is figured. As a result, I will place my analysis of the usage of the term healing within its larger narrative frameworks. This framework, as defined by the Commission, was that when Europeans first arrived, the relationship between settlers and various Aboriginal communities was one of equality and respect. It was only as the settlers gained more wealth, grew in population and took over the territory did the relationship shift to the detriment of Aboriginal cultures and development. The worst period, according to the report, came about after the enactment of the *Indian Act* and ended with residential schools. The report frames this narrative not within the perspective

of a vision of linear progress but within a cycle. As such, the Commission suggests that the present period represents the beginning of a return to a healthy, balanced relationship in which respect and partnership could be restored (ibid).

At this point, it is relevant to consider the idea of metaphor a little further. What after all is a metaphor and what function does it have? Simply put a metaphor is a comparison between two similar things or ideas, where one idea is used to describe another. In his work, the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, I.A. Richards (1937) wrote that all meanings are relative and contingent upon cultural context. Because meaning is neither stable nor fixed, language acquires meaning through use in which ambiguity is a fundamental characteristic. It serves to enrich meaning. Culturally ascribed meanings influence our understanding of metaphors and people's use of metaphors co-generates reality. Max Black argued that metaphors rest on a "system of commonplaces" which illuminates a relationship between two objects (Black, 1962). If you say Man is a wolf, the effect of calling man a wolf is conditioned by a commonplace understanding of wolf. It then organises our view of man as fierce, as a scavenger. While Aristotle used a comparative approach, Black's model refers to an interaction between the terms of the metaphor (Eubanks, 1999: 174). Metaphors act as a screen through which we look at the world; or it filters the facts, suppressing some and emphasizing others; leading to a change of attitude toward the fact, which in turn may lead to a change in fact. In other words, metaphors can change reality.

Metaphors form the basis of our world view. Lakoff and Johnson, in their groundbreaking work on metaphors, demonstrated to what degree metaphors reveal our values and orientation to the world (1980). Metaphors invoke our relationship to time,

space, one another, health and happiness, even to argumentation. Studying the use of metaphors can offer insight into the world view of those using it. By tracing the use of a particular metaphor, one can render visible the motivations and influences guiding public speech.

It is in this sense that this thesis will examine the healing metaphor. Some advocates might suggest that if a relationship requires healing, then the relationship is sick. From this angle, some form of treatment is required. For others, a relationship that requires healing is actually out of balance, not ill. The solution is to find harmony. How these two views play out in the political arena will affect the nature of the recommendations for change in public policy and how they will be received by both the public and the government. The metaphorical choice and its consequences will be the object of this study.

Studying the metaphor of healing as well as the argumentative strategies deployed by participants in the Commission will provide insight into the workings of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communicative strategies in Canada. It will provide information with which to compare grass-roots usage of the term with that of academics and public policy makers. It will provide further insight into the multiple meanings of the term healing and their associated political commitments. This research may also provide insight into some of the differences in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal modes of expression and world views. There is a dearth of information about healing in research. Research has begun in the area of psychology (Ferrara, 2004; McCabe, 2004; McCormick, 2001; McCormick, 1997, Kirmayer, 2003), education (Witt, vol. 22); health (Iwasaki et al, 2005; Benoit et al, 2003) and anthropology (Fletcher and Kirmayer, 1997); and criminology (Waldram,

1993; Jaccoud, 1995) with the purpose of outlining various healing practices. Healing has been the investigation of work in the South African context, particularly in regards to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Young, 2004). Discussions of healing in political contexts are rare and to my knowledge, nonexistent in the Canadian context which makes this thesis all the more relevant. We have little or no knowledge of what influence the rhetoric of healing has had on changes to Canadian society or to the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian government.

Research Organisation and Methodology

The purpose of this thesis is to focus on how and for what purposes the word has been deployed, to examine the tensions found within its various usages. To do so, I will break down the work into four chapters. The first, the present chapter, outlines the purpose of the thesis and lays out the context in which the issue is discussed. The second chapter will focus on the testimony of the participants in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. In this process, I will focus on how healing was deployed by Métis, Inuit and First Nations people in what became a healing ritual in which participants persuaded one another that healing was required and that Aboriginal traditions, culture and self-determination could act as the healing balm. In the third chapter, I will discuss how healing is a metaphor that fits into the larger ‘society is a body’ metaphor in which social phenomena is described in terms of the experiences of the human body. I will show that the function of the healing metaphor is to frame the politics of conflict regarding Aboriginal issues in a way that makes dialogue possible after decades of incommensurability. The healing metaphor ‘speaks’ to non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal peoples in different and similar ways. As such, it opens up a space for dialogue to begin.

In the differences between the usage lies the potential to challenge Euro-Western conceptions of how the social body should work by upholding an Aboriginal world view. This, I argue was the main function of the Royal Commission's report. Given the number of occasions in which healing is mentioned, I developed a sampling method. Here again, I turn to Condit and Lucaites' work for inspiration (1993). I will use a combination of scientifically rendered samples as well as an intuitive selection that ensures the diversity of ideas presented as well as a selection bases on types of organisations.

In the fourth and final chapter, I will sum up my findings and ponder about whether Aboriginal people pursued the healing ritual, how the dialogue between Aboriginal people, governments and Canadians has evolved and what has happened to the radical potential of the healing metaphor. I will link this initial reflection with those regarding reconciliation and healing.

In sum, healing, not reconciliation became the central trope of a commission designed to promote a new relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. This trope has been left largely uninvestigated particularly in terms of its political and rhetorical implications. Thus, a research project on the rhetoric of healing is timely and relevant for it will contribute to the on-going reflection regarding the status and living conditions of Aboriginal people and their relationship to Canadian society as a whole. On a theoretical level, a study of this nature continues to enrich the literature on the role and meaning of metaphors in public affairs. Unlike much of the present literature on metaphors in cultural and critical studies that is content with 'uncovering' and 'unmasking' the ideological effects of metaphor, I will focus on its generative potential to contribute to change.

Chapter 2: Healing Rituals and the Rhetoric of Transformation

Royal Commissions are notorious for their cost overruns and their lengthy reports that few Canadians read and that governments often fail to act upon. Yet, if one was to stop at this analysis of the value of a Royal Commission, one might miss how the Commission process (including the hearings, the report, the public's reaction to the recommendations and the official response by government including policy and legislative changes) tells us much more about politics, deliberation and social change than we might consider at first glance. In fact, they may offer insight into subtle shifts operating in political dynamics. Regna Darnell argues that Canadian Royal Commissions offer a space to accommodate ambivalence of opinion and the tension between centrifugal forces of a dominant public culture and minority perspectives (2000). For this author, the RCAP "embodies the politics of ambivalence, shifting identities and elusive borders" regarding Canadian identity (ibid). This viewpoint suggests that Commissions involving identity create a literal space where people with varying positions debate among one another, listen to testimony and arrive at conclusions that reflect the historical and contemporary tension among and between the three founding nations (English, French and Native) and waves of immigrants.

A Commission may also be constitutive of a new development and not simply reflect an already established situation. To examine these and other functions of a Commission in public life, one that steps beyond its legal mandate, I suggest studying the figures, tropes and other persuasive techniques deployed during the Commission process. In other words, I propose to study the function of words guided by theories of rhetoric. Why rhetoric? Because it provides us ways to study the power of words to affect change.

Words have the power to persuade. Participants in a Commission propose a vision, an idea of how to change a given situation and attempt to persuade Commissioners that their argument, story or suggestion should not only influence the final recommendations but should also influence how and according to what standards society should be organised. Meaning does not lie in the words themselves but in the meeting place between the intention of the speaker and the knowledge and context of the audience (Black, 1962). In other words, even as an audience, one participates in establishing the meaning of the words spoken by others. This provides power to both the speaker and the audience in discerning the fate of the ideas. According to Bryan Garsten, “To truly persuade people is to induce them to change their own beliefs and desires in light of what has been said” (2006: 7). Persuasion leads not to coercion but to judgment; judgments that “may involve integrating new information into existing patterns of thought, readjusting those patterns to make room for a new perspective, or both” (ibid: 8). Valuing judgment means reaffirming human agency. In studying the relationship between how words are deployed and the world they create, one may gain insight into how changes in beliefs and desires occur.

To demonstrate the power of words, consider for a moment Robert Terrill’s work on Malcolm X. Terrill reaffirms the relevance of words to politics in light of their capacity to create possibilities, to mobilise people and to contribute to change. He turns to Malcolm X’s words as a significant example of this power. Terrill shows how restricting one’s analysis of achievements to the area of policy outcomes might lead to a failure to identify key shifts and changes in society. He offers Malcolm X as an example. Critics of Malcolm X often suggest that he failed as a leader for his results in terms of policy

change were few. Yet this activist, engaged in a journey of collective affirmation, had a tremendous impact on more than a generation of Americans, and African Americans in particular. His aura remains powerful today, years after his death. This suggests that there was more to his rhetoric than “empty words”. Terrill demonstrates that Malcolm X’s speeches were significant because of the conceptual shift it afforded African Americans. In fact, Terrill demonstrates that Malcolm X’s speeches provided “a rhetoric that would emancipate his audiences from cultural and political limitations” (ibid: 111). His intention was to make it possible for African Americans to stretch “the boundaries of the possible” and to open up “some conceptual space that might allow analytical flexibility” (ibid: 129). Fashioned by years of discrimination and racial oppression, African Americans had been limited by the framework imposed by American culture and laws making it difficult to envisage and enact the freedom to which they aspired. Malcolm X, in what Terrill calls ‘radical judgment’, made it possible for African Americans to break down the barriers that constrained “the perceptual horizon of his audience, encouraging his listeners to become critical interpreters of their political environment” (ibid: 129). This freed up their minds to act and think in new ways, ways that made it possible to invent a new place for African Americans in US society. According to Terrill, “Malcolm’s audience is being encouraged to think in ways beyond the limitations imposed by the dominant culture and to entertain a wide range of inventional possibilities always tempered by the need to stay focused on making positive contributions toward obtaining freedom” (ibid: 145).

This understanding of the power of the word has guided my reading of the use of the term healing in the context of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Terrill

understands how speech can spur a disempowered community of people to reconstitute the ways it engages with its members and with the surrounding political environment. Through his discussion of Malcolm X, Terrill reminds us that words can make a shift in consciousness possible. To believe in the possibilities of change, a shift in consciousness must take place (Csordas, 1983; Hansotte, 2002). To move from a feeling of individual disempowerment to a belief in the potential of social change, a person must move away from the sense of being an isolated victim of natural circumstances to developing a sense of the “we” that can act upon their social situation (Paulo Freire in Brown, 1974). This shift is absolutely necessary for a community to begin to overcome the conditions of its oppression. There is no one way to achieve this shift, yet the power of the word to transform is always present.

In the next chapter, I will focus on the role of healing as a metaphor during the Royal Commission and in its final report. In this chapter however, I will examine the function of the testimony of Aboriginal people during the hearings process. I will argue that the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples’ hearings provided a forum for the development of a shift in consciousness among Aboriginal peoples. This shift took shape in the persuasive words of Aboriginal peoples themselves regarding the path to the recovery of self and community. While the study of politics may often lead to the study of institutions, the study of words is equally political. Drawing upon the testimony of Métis, First Nations and Inuit speakers, I will show that the frame of healing afforded ordinary Aboriginal peoples the opportunity to push open the boundaries that had heretofore constrained their possibilities for action. In recounting their experience, framed over and over again within the language of healing, Aboriginal people constituted

the possibilities for their empowerment and enacted the first, collective steps in what may be described as a social and political healing ritual held before the Canadian public.

Methodology

In an article published twenty-five years ago, Michael McGee wrote that ideas derive not from intellectual elites but “from the common sensation and experience of conditions which present themselves equally to all humanity” (McGee, 1980: p. 24). McGee argues that meaning develops through experiences and usages of words in everyday life. He suggests that intellectual elites are not the ones to identify new ideas; they simply put into words what others are experiencing. Interpellated by this way of studying ideas and words, I have chosen to study, not the speech of a particular First Nations leader, but the words of a wide array of Aboriginal people with and without publicly recognised roles. Also, I take the meaning of words to be different from the denotative meaning found in any dictionary. I aspire to find the meanings within a particular context grounded in the usages deployed in a particular time and place. This approach has guided my research process.

The quantity of material available from the RCAP hearings regarding the usages of the family of words relating to healing is overwhelming. Among the more than two thousand statements recorded during the Commission’s hearings, I found two thousand one hundred and fifty-nine (2,159) references to the terms heal, healed, healer, healers, healing, healings and heals. Given the limits of time and resources, I read and interpreted the statements that included one out of fifty references to any one of the family of terms. This meant that I read forty-three complete statements by hearing participants, a small percentage of all the potential statements comprising a reference to the family of words

related to healing. The percentage is small so I can make no claims to a scientific sample, nor is that necessary for the statements are surprisingly consistent. My aim is to discuss major moments of the testimony and not to show an exact representation of a sample group. Nevertheless, I have endeavoured to ground my arguments in the testimony of the people participating at the hearings. It is my assumption that theories of communication are all the more powerful when predicated on an inductive process of research wherein the texts (in this case) act as the source for eventual theorising and not as the proof for a theory already planned out prior to the primary research. Yet to have chosen healing as a term to study, I already had a hunch. Much of my own contact with Aboriginal people pointed to the significance of healing in their discourse. News reports regarding Aboriginal issues often referred to healing and the most well-known RCAP recommendation to which there was clear government follow-up involving healing. From there, I thought there might be something worth investigating with the following questions. What function does this word play in Aboriginal issues? What is it about healing that draws such attention? Essentially what is this word doing? As such, I began with an analysis of the testimony statements relating to healing and gradually developed my claims based on an interpretation of that testimony.

Celeste Condit and John Lucaites provided an important example of how to study practices in their book, *Crafting Equality*. They studied the usages of the term ‘equality’ in the United States over a long period of time. They assembled a representative collection of usages that offered a sufficient variety and depth of expression for analysis to be possible. They collected speeches, newspaper articles, pamphlets and more. The quantity of material collected made it impossible to study everything, so they gleaned a

sample from the artefacts. What their sample could not provide in variety, they completed by picking certain pieces in order to gather a diversity of expressions. I followed their example by collecting a “social scientific” type sample and then added a few other testimonies to provide more depth. For example, where the sample failed to provide sufficient information about Métis usages of healing, I simply gathered more statements from Métis people to compensate. There is clearly a subjective process involved, one to which I claim ownership. The notion of variety in this case refers to my choice to hear from Métis, First Nations and Inuit voices. This choice itself is grounded upon post-colonial critiques of scholarship and which calls upon researchers to be careful not to discuss Aboriginality as though it were a single experience regardless of the community to which one refers. The social and geographical locations and histories of Inuit, Métis and First Nations peoples differ tremendously. As a result, I present the statements according to these sub-groups and, where relevant, I will underline differences in testimony in the course of this chapter.

The Commission as a ceremony or an event

Each hearing began with a prayer lead by a local Aboriginal resident. These prayers generally called upon Commissioners and presenters to listen to one another with an open heart and mind. Drawing upon local spiritual traditions, they conferred upon the Commission an atmosphere quite different from most political hearings. While it is true that all political hearings comprise a level of formality and follow a prescribed etiquette, this one adopted a level of informality shaped in part by the location of hearings in spaces like community halls. Because many hearings were held in small communities, presenters often knew one another creating a far less stifled atmosphere of the typical parliamentary

commission held in Ottawa. In spite of the apparent informality however, the Commission nevertheless had a clear form with an opening prayer, a local leader presiding the hearings, a short opening statement by Commissioners, presentations by local people some in the form of narrative others more argumentative, followed by questions and comments by the Commissioners and ending with closing statements by the Commissioners. The formalities conferred upon the Commission the status of a ceremony.

Majo Hansotte writes that the ceremonies make it possible for a community to actualise or to renew its social identity (Hansotte, 2002: 128). Gérard Bouchard calls the social identity an *imaginaire collectif* which is the product of all the symbolic action by which a society recognises its markers in space and time (Bouchard, 2001: 14, my translation from French). The *imaginaire* makes it possible for members to communicate and situate themselves in relation to other societies and to themselves. The ceremony can contribute to the constitution not only of the *imaginaire collectif*, but of the *collectif*, or the group, itself. Hansotte says that this process can take place during the ceremony. As such, it may act as a foundational event in the constitution of a group by defining or redefining a social imaginary (Hansotte, 2002). This is not to suggest that individual First Nations, Métis and Inuit people lacked a sense of being part of a group. In fact, previous events had already forged Aboriginal identity as a diverse group. For example, Jean Chrétien's White Paper calling for the assimilation of Aboriginal people and the end of the reserve system had the effect of jump-starting Aboriginal self-affirmation movements in a number of communities (see Sawchuk in Anderson and Denis, 2003). The Assembly of First Nations (then called the National Indian Brotherhood) solidified its existence

around the mobilisation against the White Paper's policy perspectives. Nevertheless, the hearings provided the forum for a new initiative, less focused on the politics of representation than on a politics of healing. In reference to Paul Ricoeur, Hansotte writes: L'événement (...) nous fait toucher au pouvoir de commencer, c'est-à-dire poser un premier pas dans une série d'états du monde ; il faut alors parler d'initiative » (2002 : 135). An event becomes a first step, an initiative leading to change. This change allowed participants to forge a new dialogic space and to enact the first steps in a healing process. It was this process that, in reference to Terrill's understanding of the power of the word, pushed open the boundaries of reflection.

How did this take place? In part, through the telling of history, by Aboriginal people, as it is experienced in a variety of ways today. The power, that of recounting one's self and community in the public space, as well as public recognition had been denied to indigenous populations. The repression of collective histories remains one of the principal means by which the colonisation of the experience is produced (Hansotte, 2002: 129). In other words, the denial of history equates to the denial of experience. This was largely the experience of Aboriginal people in Canada. Moreover, the barriers that lead to a lack of Aboriginal participation in and interpretation of what has been written about Aboriginal people have served to deny their experience. According to Frantz Fanon, more than simply denying experience, the colonisation of experience creates a "fracture of consciousness" (Fanon, 1967: 192), where one's consciousness or sense of self is fractured because the pre-colonial markers and values are no longer appropriate to the new context. This is especially true when the new culture judges the older one to be inferior, as has been and to some extent still is the case with Euro-Canadians in regards to

the Aboriginal people. Charles Taylor argued that refusing to recognise or misrecognising a group can cause harm and may constitute a form of oppression that imprisons people into a reduced or deformed sense of self (1992: 42). The failure to recognise the other can inflict a painful injury that covers its victims with paralysing self hatred (ibid). By telling their (hi)stories, Aboriginal people offered a challenge to the suppression of their history. For Aboriginal peoples, the reconstitution of a contemporary self and community had to involve a reframing of experience within the context of a history, if not always denied, certainly ignored by the majority of Canadians and their government.

In sum, while it is true that Aboriginal peoples in Canada existed as a disparate group with a certain degree of common interests, I suggest that the ceremony, or the RCAP hearings acted as an event in which mostly unallied Aboriginal individuals from different settings across Canada, transformed the social imaginary into one that placed healing as its central, defining element. The RCAP became a process by which Aboriginal experience³ was granted legitimacy and was affirmed as a source of knowledge. Claims for recognition could be legitimately grounded upon this experience.

³ I cannot simply refer to experience without discussing the challenges that the use of experience brings to research. According to historian Joan Scott, "experience is at once always already an interpretation and is in need of interpretation" (Scott, 1992: 37). Mohanty argues that "'personal experience' is socially and 'theoretically' constructed, and it is precisely in this mediated way that it yields knowledge" (Mohanty, 1999: 3). As such, as a process mediated by theory and social context, experience must be interrogated as would any theory. My interrogation then is not about the authenticity of the testimony framed within the metaphor of healing. My purpose is to identify the function of the healing metaphor. By telling their stories of suffering, of lost culture, of political disenfranchisement, and of their desire for self and community healing, Aboriginal people are creating their world. I am not interested in examining the truths of that world, but in discussing how that world was created. The RCAP hearings offered not only a platform to express experience but one in which it was possible to construct it. What I mean is that the hearings were not simply a process by which people recounted their experience. They were actively constructing a new one; the recounting of history was forward looking, not nostalgic.

Theories of Healing

In the literature, disagreement exists over what healing actually is. For Nina Wyrstok, healing in the Native context leads to wellness which “is perceived in the context of harmony of the spirit, mind, emotions and body while illness is considered to be the result of disharmony” (Wyrstok: 15). For Christopher Fletcher and Laurence Kirmayer, healing in the Inuit context “is polysemic, referring to spirituality, social, familial and personal states of well-being, and is oriented to providing solutions to the social distress so evident in statistics on suicide and social problems,” (Fletcher and Kirmayer, 1997: 193). For some, like Kirmayer, healing can only be understood within the larger social, political and historical experience of Aboriginal peoples (Kirmayer, Simpson and Cargo, 2003: S16):

The metaphor of healing traditions has several potential meanings. First, it refers to recovering and applying traditional methods of healing. Aboriginal peoples had a wide range of methods of healing that were embedded in religious, spiritual and subsistence activities and that served to integrate the community and provide individuals with systems of meaning to make sense of suffering. These traditions were displaced and actively suppressed by successive generations of Euro-Canadian missionaries, governments and professionals. Recuperating these traditions therefore reconnects contemporary Aboriginal peoples to their historical traditions and mobilises rituals and practices that may promote community solidarity.

Recognising the connection between the individual and the community, writers on healing explicitly state that the healing sought out extends beyond the individual. “The recovery of tradition itself may be viewed as healing, both at individual and collective levels. Hence, efforts to restore language, religious and communal practices have been understood by contemporary Aboriginal peoples as fundamentally acts of healing.” (Kirmayer et al: S16). References to healing also appear to have political overtones in the contemporary context. In addition, “establishing legal claims to traditional lands and self-government may also be viewed as crucial elements of re-asserting cultural tradition, even when the forms of governance reflect contemporary political realities.” (Kirmayer et al: S16). This process may be understood as part of the healing project.

The Rhetoric of Healing

The most salient discussion of healing in light of our concern for the deliberative function of healing is that of Thomas Csordas, a cultural anthropologist. He wrote that “the object of healing is not the elimination of a thing (an illness, a problem, a symptom, a disorder) but the transformation of a person, a self that is a bodily being” (Csordas, 2002: 3). In this sense, he differs from many of those who write of healing as being the result of the restoration or the fixing of something; or more plainly as a health metaphor. Instead, the focus is on the transformation of a person, or in other words, the change “in form, shape, or appearance; metamorphosis” or to a “complete change in character, condition, etc.” (OED, 2006). In a sense, he is proposing that healing may best be described as a spiritual metaphor. My research suggests that, at least for Métis and First Nations peoples, the transformation sought out is more of a recovery or a return to a former state figured as more balanced and where traditions are rediscovered within a

contemporary context. Alma Brooks, a Micmac woman, told the Commission “the only way for our people to heal is to go back to those original instructions that were given to us. Go back to the sacred fires. Go back to the wisdom and the knowledge that was given to us and apply that to our lives” (Brooks, 1992). Gordon Peters, a Native leader, spoke of returning to the spiritual knowledge of the elders in the recovery process for their show how to achieve balance (Peters, 1992). Native presenter Juliette Duncan, for her part, spoke of recovering traditional ways of administering justice, “This is what we have to try and find – what we have lost” (Duncan, 1992). Cliff Calliou, a Métis man presenting in Fort St. John, sums up the return to a lost state (Calliou, 1992):

If we can bring our people back to our traditional way of life and our traditional values – that is why I say if you can bring those things back to our people, our people will walk with their heads held high and be proud of who they are.

This transformation in the form of a return to a balanced state should not be understood as a longing for a whole-hearted return to a past that cannot be recovered. By referring to a return to a former state, one filled with knowledge and balance, Aboriginal people articulate a challenge to racist ideas that there is something wrong with them and their cultures, which is what European Christian leaders and Canadian governments said and wrote until fairly recently.

The ritual

Thomas Csordas’ most influential remarks provide insight into understanding the function of healing and how people come to want healing. Csordas argues that “healing at its most human is not an escape into irreality and mystification, but an intensification of the encounter between suffering and hope at the moment in which it finds a voice, where

the anguished clash of bare life and raw existence emerges from muteness into articulation” (Csordas, 2002: 11). This sentence is particularly compelling because it speaks to the nature of much of the testimony I read. The Commission became a healing ritual because Aboriginal people risked bringing to the fore the clash between suffering and hope. A number of people testified despite high levels of cynicism and doubt regarding the government’s intentions. Distrust of the government, of the Commissioners, of the goals and power of the Commission, of Church organisations, of Aboriginal leaders were rampant. Nevertheless, many hundreds of people participated. People referred to their hope and to their suffering that found articulation in the discourse of healing. Ultimately, as I will now show, that faith, the one that inspired such widespread Aboriginal participation had the effect of reinforcing Aboriginal people’s faith in each other and themselves.

We have already established that the hearings constituted a ceremony, one that reconstitutes a collective *imaginaire*. I have yet to show how. Csordas’ work on the rhetoric of transformation of ritual healing provides some key insights for he elaborates on how an individual becomes a participant in the healing process. For healing to occur, he argued, there are three rhetorical moves that must take place. The first step, Csordas calls predisposition. “Within the context of the primary community of reference, the supplicant must be persuaded that healing is possible, that the group’s claims in this respect are coherent and legitimate” (Csordas, 2002: 27). This simply means that the person who might seek healing first has to believe that s/he requires healing. This means that there is recognition of a problem to address and that a healing ritual is a potential solution. In addition, person must also be persuaded that healing is possible (Swora,

2004: 190). The second rhetorical move involves empowerment. “The supplicant must be persuaded that the therapy is efficacious – that he is experiencing the healing effects of spiritual power” (Csordas, 2002: 27). In other words, it is empowering to believe that one is experiencing a healing power. Thirdly, the final step, Csordas calls transformation in which “the supplicant must be persuaded to change – that is, he must accept the cognitive/affective, behavio(u)ral transformation that constitutes healing within the religious system” (Csordas: 27). The supplicant “is persuaded to change the manner in which he or she attends to the world and relates to others, and to make the mental, emotional, and behavio(u)ral changes that constitute healing within that healing group” (Swora, 2004: 190). There is a change in the way the healed goes about his or her life because of having been persuaded to change.

While Csordas writes of this process in terms of individual healing, this process works equally effectively in a collective setting. I will demonstrate that the RCAP hearings provided the forum for the first and second steps to take place: predisposition and empowerment. The third step makes the new social imaginary possible, one in which Aboriginal people become the centre of their own lives as opposed to remaining the subjects of the Indian Act. The process is slightly more complicated because the supplicant to persuade is a group of detached people from different communities around Canada and not a self-contained spiritual community found within a limited locale. It is also complicated by the fact that the testimony functions differently than religious discourse. It has neither the tidiness nor the coherence of a religious organisation. It does however possess a series of fragments that unearth memories of forgotten narratives and of teachings of the elders that awaken new yearnings for healing in a contemporary

context. This is a messy process of mutual persuasion in which people convince one another that healing is necessary and possible and that the Aboriginal traditions and ways of knowing provide valuable solutions for achieving wellness. In engaging in this process, Aboriginal people set the stage for a new *imaginaire collectif*

Contrary to Csordas' studies of the persuasiveness of healing discourse, the group's claims cannot already be shown to be "coherent and legitimate" because neither the group nor its methods have been formally constituted. As such, the persuasive process in this case operates differently from the model suggested by Csordas. The group in fact constitutes itself through the demonstration that healing is possible. It does so by first arguing (not demonstrating for we are not in a scientific experiment but in a process of persuasion) that healing means finding balance between mental, spiritual, physical and emotion states of being, and that this is a coherent and legitimate response to the suffering identified by Aboriginal peoples. This is essentially a spiritual process, one that for many Aboriginal presenters is deeply connected to individual, social, political and environmental concerns.

In the upcoming paragraphs, I will show how participants attempt to persuade that healing was required. To whom are the presenters speaking when so many argue in favour of healing and of recognising and taking responsibilities for the problems, the pain and the solutions? There is more than one audience. Speakers are trying to persuade one another that something must shift to counter the pain and dysfunction and that this will happen if people seek a healing path. It seems that healing rhetoric interpellates people into becoming responsible for the healing process.

Testimony after testimony referred to illness, pain and dysfunction and the need for action. In her testimony, Alma Brooks, referring to the high numbers of First Nations men in prison, mentioned that she realised that out of all the pain, “I began to saw (sic) a vision that there was a need to heal” (Brooks, 1992). Linda Staats, a Mohawk from the Six Nations Reserve, affirmed that “the long-term policies and actions aimed at indoctrinating us into believing that what we are and know doesn’t count (...) have taken their toll on us, and we are suffering the consequences” (Staats, 1993). Tony Mercredi, a Métis man, added “We are sick and we have to come to terms with that at some point. We still have to go through (...) the healing process” (1992). Regularly, presenters spoke about how the problems are being denied. Tom Lindly from the Westbank Indian Band argued that the dysfunction that resulted from 140 years of colonization is a sickness that (1993):

will persist if we continue to deny that there is a problem. Denial will work for a short period; however in the long term the truth will show at every opportunity. (...) Our community is a dysfunctional community, and it is sad to consider that we must reach this desperate state of affairs before we realize that we need healing.

Gary Patsey confirms this and explains why this might be the case (Patsey, 1992):

In the past there has been a lot of reluctance to put a lot of these social issues in a community agenda, the band council agenda because it is a very difficult problem to handle. It is easy to build houses, easy to build subdivisions, but with hurts and pains that arise from years and years of repression they are a little more difficult, but in the two years I have been in term, healing has become, has emerged from

the back burners up to the front now and we are committed to channel more resources to healing.

Presenters are trying to identify the elements that may convince others that the time for healing has arrived. Lillian Sanderson, a Métis woman, argues that “Our traditions and culture will become a memory unless we begin to look at our dysfunctions and begin to heal” (1992).

There is a consistent message that the healing process must enrich, accompany or even precede the self-government process. Roy Fabian offers such a critique (1993):

We are not taking any responsibility for ourselves. The whole process of land claims negotiations was that. It was really a culturally oppressive process that we went through because we were negotiating against a group of people that had policies that were steeped in cultural oppression. Those policies still exist today. Unless we as native people begin to heal ourselves and we start taking care of ourselves individually, then I think we might have a chance.

Self-government requires taking responsibility for “ourselves.” Not everyone agrees with the role of healing. Patricia Monture-Okanee, a witness at the hearings, suggests that healing circles are a diversion while the criminal justice system maintains control (1992). Then again, Philip Fontaine, the Grand Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and present head of the Assembly of First Nations said that “Healing and rebuilding are integral to the evolution of self-government” (1992). For him, the reasons for engaging in healing intertwine with how that healing should take place.

Cynthia Wesley-Esquamaux in her testimony identified some of the goals of healing (Wesley-Esquamaux, 1993):

I think we need to rebuild that mutual respect and support that we once had at one time, rather than jockeying for position with each other. I think that is going to make a real difference on how we start to co-exist with each other as Native people and how we support each other and how we start that healing process.

In Calgary, Gerri Manyfingers suggested that (1993):

we have to go through a massive educational process to understand the cycle of violence, what is happening to us. There isn't one person who hasn't been mean to somebody, who hasn't violated someone even if it is not terribly violent. We have to understand the cycle of violence and begin healing. (...) People in southern Alberta want to be healed. They don't want to continue living in a hurt society.

Over and over again, one hears how the solutions will be self-made. Nancy Van Heest in a written statement to the Commission affirmed: "We believe that the solutions will come from our people and we as Aboriginal people know what healing is for ourselves and our community" (1993). This sentiment was echoed by Bruce Mack, another witness, who said, "we believe very strongly that it is a critical first step but that healing isn't a single process or a single action. It is part of a holistic process. What we are talking about here is empowerment, about self-government, and that is all very much a part of the healing process" (1993). Much of the testimony identifies that the changes and solutions must be defined by Aboriginal people and guided by traditional ways of knowing. We will spend more time on this shortly. Before however it is important to recognise a different discourse operates among Inuit presenters, one that has some common references to Métis and First Nations' presenters but that deploys a different language.

Inuit speakers tend to concur with other Aboriginal presenters regarding the need to address the pain. Inuk presenter, Mary Jane Litchard argues that “Counselling is really needed, it's very badly needed, counselling everywhere, and just support groups, healing, talking circles, are really needed, so we could solve a lot of these problems, and we could be uplifted” (1992). In reference to the effects of residential school abuse, Marius Tungilik, an Inuk witness said “It is necessary to get in touch with our buried emotional pain that we have suppressed in order to begin to heal” (1992). Among Inuit presenters, in contrast to the Métis and First Nations presenters, the solution that is identified is often counselling and culturally-appropriate services, not self-government, not collective action, not restorative justice. It tends to be less focused on self-identified collective solutions but on therapeutic models of treatment. It therefore differs considerably from many of the other Aboriginal voices calling for a holistic approach to healing, involving physical, mental, spiritual and psychological changes to individuals, the community, laws and more. This may be due to a shortage of samples available for the word healing was used far less by the Inuit than by the other Aboriginal presenters. It may simply be a weakness of my particular sample group. Nevertheless, the final report of the Commission recognised that the Inuit might not use these terms to describe their objectives to recover healthy societies but that the goals were similar.

Most of First Nations and Métis testimony with a particular nuance among the Inuit point to the idea that there is a problem to address. The problem is the pain and suffering caused by colonial practices and policies. The solution that is identified is healing. I have shown that Aboriginal presentations initiated the first part of a healing

ritual, that of convincing one another that a problem existed and that it required action.

The action was healing.

But what actually constitutes the healing path? This is the object of the second rhetorical move that involves empowerment. “The supplicant must be persuaded that the therapy is efficacious – that he is experiencing the healing effects of spiritual power” (ibid). In collective context, where the ritual is being defined during the process as opposed to existing prior to the ceremony, the method of healing comes in fragments. If the Commissioners are careful, they will notice that there is a coherent picture that comes from the testimony. In addition to convincing one another that healing is required and worthwhile, participants, are actually convincing each other that the way to achieve this state of being comes from a recovery and a redefinition of older, disappearing traditions ranging from reclaiming language and land, to taking responsibility for the community’s health and more. This process represents the second part in a healing ritual: that of convincing one another that the communities possess legitimate knowledge about how to go about healing. The testimony lays down that path:

We must heal ourselves and become, once again, spiritually connected to the earth and learn the wisdom that comes from that. The only way for our people to heal is to go back to those original instructions that were given to us. Go back to the sacred fires. Go back to the wisdom and the knowledge that was given to us and apply that to our lives. So that's what the medicine lodge is about (Brooks, 1992).

Elders are mentioned as having the practice and knowledge required to go back to the lost traditions. Moreover, they are seen as having the strength to give direction. In her

statement, First Nations witness Ethel Lamothe spoke of her own journey during which she sought guidance from elders.

Myself, I didn't do it completely on my own; I got direction from other people that were strong in their own sense, that have been on their own healing cycle, and they guided me. Thus, I know that our very own people are going to need those guides there, someone there to kind of help them a bit along the way. (Lamothe, 1992).

The elders are viewed as having the spiritual knowledge that healing requires. As always, the cause of the dysfunction is viewed as a result of residential schools, the Indian Act, etc. The symptoms are drug abuse, suicide, violence. The following speaker is a Chief of the Ontario Chiefs and acknowledges that Aboriginal communities have work to do that extends beyond the relationship to the government:

We have already discussed, and you have heard from people, the effects of the residential school system, the effects of the Indian Act. We know they are all there. But what do we do about them in the healing process? (...) One step that we think is to bring people together to talk about it. (...) The other thing I think is very critical to where we are going (...) and that's to bring back the Elders as a major component of any kind of process that we are involved in. (...) they still hold the information that we require. They hold the spiritual part of what is needed on our side of the table to begin an honest working relationship with each other. They also hold the wisdom of their time in that they know the time requirements and the patience that is needed for us to be able to mend the differences that we have amongst ourselves. (...) the Elders who have brought

both men and women into this process to show us what the balance is, and to show us what the difference in the responsibilities are that we have, and again to acknowledge to us that we are part of those responsibilities that have to be dealt with (Peters, 1992).

The knowledge of how to cope resides in the wisdom of the elders. First Nations community organiser, Tom Dockstader, also turned to the elders for guidance in solving community problems:

We consulted with Elders. We consulted with community members in pain, and we decided to confront our own pain and to begin a process of communication within our community. Medicine was used to soothe our pain. Prayers were used to seek guidance from the Creator, and slowly but surely over the next couple of years we began to operate and pull ourselves out of this crisis by operating from the basic premise that the solution to not just this crisis but to all crises lay within our ability to solve as community members (Dockstader, 1993).

One of the contributions that elders bring to the healing approach is the idea that a return to spirituality is important and that the solutions lay in the hands of the community.

Slowly, the testimony statements converged around the belief that Aboriginal people had the capacity to find balance and peace by looking to rediscover their self, their languages and their traditions and to take responsibility for the pain. In doing so, the presenters were convincing one another that the solutions, the healing remedy, were available and could be effective. First nations witness Janet Yorke illustrated some of the shifts that this process would imply:

Our elders and traditional people encourage us to look at initiating a healing approach, rather than continuing to focus on the negative, on the violence. (...) There is a contradiction between a solution that seeks harmony and balance among the individuals, family and community, and that is crisis oriented, punishes the abuser and separates the family and community. Our approach to wellness includes physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. Throughout our work in addressing family violence we strive to return our people to a time where everyone had a place in the circle and was valued. Recovering our identity will contribute to healing ourselves. Our healing will require us to rediscover who we are. We cannot look outside for our self-image, we need to rededicate ourselves to understanding our traditional ways. In our songs, ceremony, language and relationships lie the instructions and directions to recovery. We must avoid a pan Indian approach. The issues of violence in our communities are diverse and so are our own cultural ways. It will be a long journey to recovery, the east, south, west and north all must develop their own processes of healing, as must urban and reserve. This must be done if we are to return once more as a people without violence. (Orton on behalf of Janet Yorke, 1993).

References to the recovery of something abound whether self-image, knowledge or balance. There is a stable pattern: the language is one of return to a former healthier state. This is a way of reaffirming that the pathology lies not in Aboriginal culture but in the colonial laws and practices. This approach makes the call for healing rhetorically effective because it identifies the cause as being without yet the solutions may be found within Aboriginal communities. This means people surpass the obstacle that guilt

represents in order to begin changes to the community. Nor do community members have to wait upon others for change to occur. This approach is extremely empowering. A Métis presenter, Cliff Calliou, confirms this tendency to reinforce the quality of former traditions and to identify them as part of the solution:

If we can bring our people back to our traditional way of life and our traditional values -- that is why I say if you can bring those things back to our people, our people will walk with their heads held high and be proud of who they are
(Calliou: 1992)

Métis witness Yvon Lamarche, a strong believer that Métis should be seen as the people who can bring together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians pursues Calliou's line of inquiry:

I believe that in whatever model we decide upon it is imperative that we remember the primary beliefs we hold about healing. I believe that we must continue to foster healing methods which seek to re-establish a state free of disease, versus a model to eradicate disease. (Lamarche, 1993).

His contribution to the discussion, much like others, is to qualify the epistemology of Aboriginal traditions. He suggests that healing means not treating the illness per se (that might fix the problem but might not be effective in reducing the dis-ease) but to bring the individual and the community to a state of health in which dis-ease is no longer present.

The Inuit perspective appears slightly different than that of the First Nations and Métis presenters. Few refer to the traditions of the past whether spiritual or other. Three main suggestions about how to go about healing stand out. First, people should be encouraged to speak of their pain. Secondly, the Inuit should be consulted more fully;

their opinions ought to hold more sway. Finally, services ought to be made available and adapted to the cultural context. Why their presentations differ in language and content may be explained by a number of factors. Many Inuit continue to speak and even live in Inuktituk and have been less influenced by English. In many First Nations and Métis communities, English is the language most commonly used. Essentially, the ways of speaking differ because the Inuit have been less influenced by the ways of expressing one's self found in the English language. Much of the language of healing - the medicine wheel, the sweet grass ceremonies, the smudge using tobacco, the moon ceremonies, etc. – well-known in First Nations and Métis communities, has not been part of the Inuit traditions. Speaking in terms of the Sweat Lodge or other “healing ceremonies” might not simply find cultural echo. Moreover, these ceremonies are particular to the Plains Indians but have become part of a pan-Indian cultural re-birth movement that had not (at the time of the Commission) really affected the Inuit. Finally, the Inuit speakers refer to service provision but, in contrast to the others, little to community organising and self-made initiatives. This may be because they find there is sufficient Inuit control over institutions and services or it may be that they cannot even envisage playing a more significant role than being consulted and consuming services defined and possibly provided by others. To illustrate, consider this Inuk presenter's statement:

We are really in need of consultation. If we're going to survive, and also solve a lot of these problems, we need a lot of consultation in everything. And children and teenagers should be asked to freely discuss what they need and help solve problems (Litchard, 1992).

In a moving statement about the effects of residential school abuse, Mr. Tungilik spoke of his suggestions about how healing should be achieved. His emphasis appears to be on the power of knowledge in finding peace:

During the 1950s and 1960s, over a hundred children were sent away to Chesterfield Inlet from as far away as Pond Inlet, Pelly Bay, Repulse Bay, Igloodik, Hall Beach, and Coral Harbour. We need to know why we were subjected to such treatment in order that we may begin to understand and heal. I strongly recommend a public inquiry to deal with the Canadian government and the Roman Catholic church to have them disclose information of their treatment of Inuit children and to disclose information pertaining to the residential school policy. I would also recommend that a reunion of the students of Chesterfield Inlet be arranged in the near future. Combined, it will serve as an effective means of making the information and the resources available. Then, perhaps, we will be able to put the past to rest (Tungilik, 1992).

Despite differences in rhetoric, speakers referred to the presence of pain and suffering and that the causes lay not in Aboriginal cultures per se but as a result of colonialism.

When examined broadly, Aboriginal people, with possible exception of the Inuit, lay the foundations of what may be described as the healing path. They provided the fragments upon which Commissioners could build a cohesive text regarding the methods and requirements of healing. In so doing, they convinced one another that Aboriginal people possessed the knowledge required to reanimate Aboriginal communities. This was an empowering process and represented the second step of a healing ritual played out in a collective setting.

In sum, the hearings ended up providing the framework for Aboriginal participants to persuade other Aboriginal people, leaders and Commissioners that healing was required. Csordas called this the first step in a healing ritual. The hearings also made it possible to forge a common (although diverse) understanding of how to achieve the goal of wellness. The methods identified in the course of the hearings require an active decision by people to foster cultural, spiritual, community and individual re-birth. Csordas called this the second step in a healing ritual. This step requires participants to be persuaded that the treatment offered is efficacious. In defining the goals and methods of the healing process, participants laid the groundwork for imagining the third and final step in a healing ritual, that of transformation of behaviour and world-view. In this sense, the hearings constituted a healing ritual in a collective setting. I hope to have demonstrated how a shift in consciousness was possible and how it occurred by referring to the language of healing and its rituals.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the function of the metaphor of healing during the RCAP and in the final report. I will show how the use of the word healing by the report represents an important shift, one that moves healing from the private world of individual health and wellness to the political domain of societal wellness among Aboriginal people and between Aboriginal people and the Canadian government. This shift aims to create sufficient common ground by constructing a rhetoric that engages Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in dialogue and understanding.

Chapter 3: The Metaphor of Healing: Forging Radical Dialogue

Although it may be tempting to assume that metaphors serve no further purpose than adding beauty and mystery to our literary and everyday language, we would be mistaken. Metaphors can also inform us about ways of knowing and how we organise society. In fact, much of the scholarly work over the last thirty years points to a far more politically relevant reason for studying metaphor. Metaphors permeate political life and if understood can enrich our understanding of politics. Scholars have shown how metaphors have the capacity not only to *influence* but also to *create* (and *constrain*) ways in which politics is done. Much of this work concentrates on showing one aspect of this capacity, specifically the negative and restrictive roles of metaphor. In this chapter, I will offer an alternate view to this critical literature on metaphor by showing how a political metaphor, criticised in one context for its conservative impact, can have a progressive and generative function in another context.

This chapter will focus on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People's use of the metaphor of healing. I will do so because the RCAP framed much of Aboriginal people's aspirations and commitments in terms of healing. It is important to study because it fostered the conditions for dialogue to occur between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada. In addition, the assertion of an Aboriginal meaning of healing as it relates to a larger world-view of how to organise society offered a challenge to ways of knowing of the Canadian society. As a result, the healing metaphor actually offered an alternative basis upon which the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and governments could be redefined.

How did the metaphor of healing make dialogue possible? Healing has different associations depending upon the influence of a variety of cultural references whether in pop psychology, Aboriginal traditional practices, biomedicine or Christian thought. In communication theory, it has been argued that the meaning of a given speech lies as much in the audience as in the intention of the author. In other words, meaning is constituted in the relation between the speaker and the audience, which implies that meaning is contingent upon the situation.

For the first time in Canadian history, the hearings and the report made it possible for speakers (mostly Aboriginal people) to address a wide audience (mostly non-Aboriginal people) over their history and their experiences following the arrival of Europeans in Canada. The audience, drawn in by the tales of suffering, became willing to listen and possibly able to enter into a dialogue about the future. This future was discussed to a large degree in terms of healing. On the one hand, the language of healing appealed to Aboriginal people for it mirrored the language and epistemology of those seeking the path by which they could recover their lost languages, traditions and independence. On the other, it appealed to non-Aboriginal Canadians for it spoke about Aboriginal issues in terms of health and wellness, something to which few could object, especially when compared to the protest language of Oka and other demonstrations or acts of civil disobedience that may appear more threatening to some publics (Reid and Ng in Reid, Gunter and Smith, 2005). Yet, in spite of the fact that healing appears non-threatening, it actually has a radical potential. I will demonstrate that the metaphor of healing did more than make dialogue possible. Rather than simply creating the conditions for dialogue on the appearances of common ground, the RCAP report also presented a

radical, yet gentle challenge to dominant modes of knowing and organising society in Canada and in Aboriginal communities in a way that places the burden of change onto non-Aboriginal governments.

The RCAP Report

The RCAP report was released in 1996, four years after the Commission began its work. Based on their own research, the hearings and round table discussions, the Commissioners provided more than four thousand pages of analysis and hundreds of recommendations on the changes required to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal (government) relations in Canada. As might be expected, the language and preoccupations of the testimony statements, discussed in my previous chapter, were translated into the final report. I say *translated* for two reasons. The Commissioners introduced the language of the hearings into the report by deploying the metaphor of healing. In fact, this term took a central position in the report, far beyond the section involving health issues and as I explained in chapter one, it replaced reconciliation as a defining term. Its employment extended into areas regarding self-government, land claims, cultural rites and practices, health and wellness, economic development and inter-governmental relations. I also refer to translation because of the Commission's interpretive function. The report had an audience that extended far beyond Aboriginal communities. Its public was varied and typically non-Aboriginal with limited knowledge about Aboriginal histories and traditions. As such, the report served as a translator between what Aboriginal people across Canada had been saying during the hearings and non-expert, non-Aboriginal readers. Translation is important because it can serve to break down barriers of language grounded in class and culture (Stout, 1996). It means that

people who are fluent in different cultures and languages can perform a way of speaking or writing that is accessible to both of the groups (ibid). The report renders the language of healing developed in an Aboriginal-centred perspective accessible to non-Aboriginal people in Canada. As a first step in opening up the landscape of dialogue, this was important.

This chapter offers a very different perspective from much of what has been written on the RCAP report. To a large degree, scholars have condemned the government for its inaction over the report, while others have simply ignored it. Those that have studied the report itself recognise its importance but tend to focus on its negative aspects. Kiera Ladner argues that the report proposes a vision of governance characterised by “negotiated inferiority” (2001). If implemented, she says, the recommendations would actually perpetuate an unequal relationship between Aboriginal nations and federal and provincial governments. Her critique is aimed less at the outcome of the report but of the direction the RCAP report took. Contrary to common belief, she argues that the government has in fact begun to implement the findings and in doing so entrenched the inferiority of Aboriginal peoples in the Canadian regime. In another article, John Borrows argues that the government has failed to implement the Commission’s recommendations on treaty rights, thereby maintaining a contemporary form of colonialism (2001). Anderson and Denis suggest that the report privileged a narrative of the nation thereby ignoring the concerns of urban natives whose realities do not fit within a nation model (Anderson and Denis, 2003). They sum up much of what has been written about the Report by arguing that most academic or other articles regarding Aboriginal issues now refer to the RCAP recommendations in one way or another. They say the report has

become somewhat of a sacred cow, in that references to Aboriginal issues must be framed or presented in reference to the RCAP report. At the same time, they also argue like others the government has done very little with the hundreds of recommendations. More importantly, like other critical or post-colonial theorists, they conclude that the Commission legitimises marginalising practices by the state and perpetuates the colonial relationship between the Canadian government and Aboriginal peoples (ibid). Whether it is the report itself or the government response to it (or lack thereof), most tend to conclude that colonialism is alive and well. There is no need to contradict the notion that the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and governments are infused with colonialism; nor is it necessary to deny that governments have done little with the recommendations. Instead, I suggest that the analysis offered of the report fails to engage with its radical critique of Canadian society. I will show how something important was operating, something that touches upon the symbolic aspects of deliberation and living together that often goes unnoticed but that in this case challenged mainstream perspectives on the foundations of our social organisation. Ultimately, what I'm offering is a re-reading of the value of the RCAP and of its report.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The first aims to situate the metaphor of healing in history and in relation to another metaphor that suggests that 'society is a body.' In this section, I will explore some of the implications involved in framing political issues within the context of the body metaphor. The second section examines some of the scholarly work regarding metaphor in politics, much of which presents an important critique of the ideological effects of metaphor. Although this critique offers an important explanatory contribution to the literature on the role of

metaphor, I will argue that it fails to welcome how metaphors can shore up and foster the development of a *vibrant* polis concerned with concrete issues of justice and human rights. In the third section, I will demonstrate how the report created the conditions for dialogue to occur. It did so primarily through its appeal to emotions, a powerful role of metaphorical language and tool of rhetoric. I will show how the context of the report gave the metaphor of healing greater strength in its ability to draw in the Canadian audience. I will also address how the multiple meanings and references associated with the term healing helped set the conditions for dialogue to occur. Fourth, I will engage with my assertion that the metaphor of healing proposes a radical challenge to a Euro-Canadian model of the ‘society is a body’ metaphor. I will show what epistemological perspective the report brought to the discussion of the problems and solutions regarding Aboriginal well-being and how it acted as a challenge to Euro-Canadian ways of organising and thinking about society.

Healing, Bodies and Society: Metaphors in Politics

Although it is dangerous to use denotative definitions to discuss the use of words in politics, I will do so nevertheless. They are dangerous because they might tempt us into believing that words and meanings exist “out there”, separate from their constitution in socio-political contexts. So I turn to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) because it is a dictionary of usages. The reason for using this tool that tends to fix meanings is that a brief examination of the evolution of the term will show how the term healing developed. This will allow me to situate it within a larger framework that I will discuss shortly.

Healing comes from the old word *hele* which itself is related to the old German word *whole*. Healing and wellness has always referred in some ways to notions of the

“uninjured, sound, healthy, entire, complete.”⁴ In circulation for over a thousand years, the verb ‘heal’ has three orders of meaning. The first refers to the physical health of individuals: “(t)o make whole or sound in bodily condition; to free from disease or ailment, restore to health or soundness; to cure (*of* a disease or wound).”⁵ This is the literal meaning of healing. There are no metaphors here and no second level meaning. It serves as the basis for the other meanings that become more complex.

The second refers more figuratively to the realm of spirituality or psychology. It means “(t)o restore (a person, etc.) from some evil condition or affection (as sin, grief, disrepair, unwholesomeness, danger, destruction); to save, purify, cleanse, repair, mend.” (ibid). These spiritual and psychological meanings adopt a metaphorical dimension. As Lakoff and Johnson demonstrated, the limits of language make it difficult to describe abstract concepts (1980). The experience of the body, they argue, stands as a concrete experience by which we can describe abstract ideas. Certain ideas such as the mind or the spirit are difficult concepts to grasp. We ascribe metaphors of the body to these concepts in order to be able to discuss them in terms accessible to our cognitive abilities. It is true that the mind cannot be held and that it is at once shapeless and embodied (for it does not exist outside the body of a person). In order to speak of the mind or the spirit we refer to it as though it was tangible and this is how we come to speak of the healing of the mind. Thus healing the spirit or the mind is a metaphor.

⁴ http://0-dictionary.oed.com.mercury.concordia.ca/cgi/entry/50284990?query_type=word&queryword=whole&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&search_id=i2T8-YFqYF4-6852&result_place=1

⁵ http://0-dictionary.oed.com.mercury.concordia.ca/cgi/entry/50103633?query_type=word&queryword=heal&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&search_id=DTyK-yWWLHF-7516&result_place=1

The RCAP report uses this meaning abundantly, in both an emotional and spiritual sense. The presence of suffering and pain in the lives of Aboriginal people was pervasive during the hearings. It makes sense that the report mirrors that reality. The Commissioners report that “Women spoke eloquently of the need to secure the safety and heal the spirit of all those who bear the current brunt and the past scars of family breakdown, alcoholism and violence” (RCAP, 1996: 13). The scars in this case are not physical but spiritual in nature. The healing sought implies the restoration of wellness to the spirit. This reference is metaphorical in that it uses the body to describe an abstract sensation. Other uses of healing in the report combine the two meanings, referring both to bodily and emotional health. This was true when it came time to talking about traditional healing:

Traditional healing has been defined as ‘practices designed to promote mental, physical and spiritual well-being that are based on beliefs which go back to the time before the spread of western, ‘scientific’ bio-medicine.’ When Aboriginal people in Canada talk about traditional healing, they include a wide range of activities, from physical cures using herbal medicines and other remedies, to the promotion of psychological and spiritual well-being using ceremony, counselling and the accumulated wisdom of the elders (ibid: 22).

In this case, the Commission wrote of medical remedies intended to heal physical ailments and ceremonies to heal the spiritual and psychological dimensions of the person. The Commission refers to an Elder who said that “healing means mending bodies and souls” (ibid: 30). Healing is identified by the Commissioners to be an important solution to the challenges faced by many Aboriginal people. The report sometimes quotes

presenters at the hearings as a way to render their idea more vibrant. This was the case with Mavis Henry from the Pauquachin Band who used the second meaning associated with healing. In reference to a question regarding the reasons for healing, she said:

Why healing: I find that there are so many changes that our people have undergone, so many adaptations that we have had to make to survive. There are many deep-rooted emotional problems that do not get addressed — the problems we see day to day in the high number of suicides, death by misadventure, violent deaths, high jail populations, alcohol and drug abuse and just so many throw-away people that we have.

This usage creates confusion between the second usage over the emotional healing of an individual person and that of a group. This example in which she refers to ‘our people’ may be taken as meaning, each person individually requires healing or it may mean that the ‘people’ as a group, as a whole, require healing. The implications are different. This leads us to the third meaning of healing.

The OED explores another meaning afforded to healing. According to this dictionary, it appears in Great Britain in the 19th century. This usage is the defining usage of the report and it is thoroughly metaphorical. Thomas Babington Macaulay, writing of the political problems between England and Ireland in 1849, wrote “Something might have been done to heal the lacerated feelings of the Irish gentry.”⁶ It appears that this was the first time, at least in recorded English history, that healing a group of people was mentioned. In using the word ‘lacerated’, in association with the words ‘heal’ and ‘feelings’, the metaphor draws on the meaning referring to a physical wound. This way of talking fits in well with a root metaphor that became popular in the Renaissance period,

⁶ <http://0-dictionary.oed.com.mercury.concordia.ca/help/bib/oed2-m.html#macaulay>

the ‘society is a body’ metaphor⁷ (Judge, 1988). Once the term healing moves from referring to an individual person with a physical or spiritual problem, it becomes a metaphor for social or political phenomena. Once the society is figured as a body it makes perfect sense to figure a poor or tense relationship resulting in the infliction of a wound upon another. Shortly after, a second use of healing was recorded by the OED. Historian Sir Thomas Erskine May wrote in 1861 that “A new reign was favourable to the healing of political differences.”⁸ He was writing about the constitutional history of England. In this usage, the reference to politics is explicit. The metaphor of the social body deploys metaphorical language referring to the health and wellbeing of the political body, implying the desire for stability and peace. This time however the reference is more abstract for the reference is to “political differences”, not actual wounds or illnesses. The metaphor draws upon the second meaning of healing relating more to spirituality and psychology but extends it to groups of people. This usage was very present during the RCAP and in the report. The following citation is consistent with much of the report (RCAP, 1996):

The future must include making a place for those who have been affected by the schools to stand in dignity, to remember, to voice their sorrow and anger, and to be listened to with respect. With them Canada needs to pursue justice and mutual healing; it must build a relationship, as the Manitoba leader and much decorated veteran Thomas Prince encouraged the government to do in his appearance before the joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons in 1947, that will bind Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people “so that they can trust each other

⁷ For more about this root metaphor, refer to the next section

⁸ <http://0-dictionary.oed.com.mercury.concordia.ca/help/bib/oed2-m2.html#may>

and...can walk side by side and face this world having faith and confidence in one another.” (RCAP, 1996).

The report suggests that mutual healing, that is healing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, was required. The language of physical or emotional well-being is transferred onto collectivities.

Clearly, by the mid-1800s, a new usage, one that referred explicitly and implicitly to political differences, feelings and relations came to the fore, sometimes combining spiritual or psychological language in the talk of politics. This way of speaking of social differences and conflicts has persisted until today. Now that I've established some of the historical uses of the metaphor of healing, I will now discuss how it fits into a larger, conceptual metaphor that both shapes and reflects how we think.

Linking healing to body metaphors

The line between the literal and the metaphorical can become blurred when speakers and interpreters no longer identify or simply cannot identify a term or a concept as being metaphorical. This is often the case when neither the speaker nor the audience tends to take note of the fact that the word or idea invoked actually refers to something else. Healing may be one such word. To sustain the idea that healing is a metaphor is difficult because it no longer carries originality; it sparks no noticeable reaction, unlike much of what we associate with metaphors. In fact, healing is rarely perceived as a metaphor because its literal meaning is so clearly carried over to the social phenomena. When we say a body needs healing, we tend to refer to a wound or an illness that requires some kind of healing action. The meaning of healing is simply carried over onto the society (the etymology of the word metaphor itself means to carry over). When we say a

society needs healing, we tend not even to imagine a body requiring healing, we simply take it for granted. This means that we might not be fully aware of its role when we interpret speech.

If we fail to perceive healing as metaphorical, this is equally true for body metaphors. When we hear about healing political differences, we rarely stop to think about whether a political difference can, in fact, heal like a wound heals. Yet in political life, we regularly use body talk without noticing. This is because speaking of society as a body has become commonplace. We “mend” and “nurse” a political relationship. Even though we have no societal doctors or healers, we speak of political wounds. Tony Moy and Susan Sontag point to a number of examples where what they call a ‘society is a body’ metaphor is deployed: the health of society, social ills, social death; the death of society, social recovery, the nation is in a depression, social afflictions, social paralysis, cancer on society, backbone of society.⁹ References to the social body are everywhere. This metaphor uses the body to describe society. In this context, healing is a metaphor that draws upon the more structural body metaphors.

The RCAP report takes up this metaphor; references to the ‘society is a body’ metaphor are clear and extensive. The Commission report states:

Healing is a term used often by Aboriginal people to signify the restoration of physical, social, emotional and spiritual vitality in individuals and social systems. It implies the revitalization of their confidence in themselves, their communities and cultures, confidence that must be grounded in their daily lives. Healing also has an intercultural meaning. Learning about and acknowledging the errors of the past, making restitution where possible, and correcting distortions of history are

⁹ http://cogsci.berkeley.edu/lakoff/metaphors/Society_Is_A_Body.html, retrieved on May 20, 2006.

essential first steps in the process of healing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (RCAP, 1996: 51).

The reference to social systems is explicit and so are terms such as communities and cultures, all involving multiple people identified as part of a group. In this sense, healing is deployed as a desired outcome for whole groups, thereby taking up the 'society is a body' metaphor. What is interesting about this statement, one that draws upon the earlier English usages is that it includes both the intrapsychic elements of healing projected onto the community and the inter-relational aspects of healing between two communities. This, better than any other statement, expresses the use of the healing metaphor by the report. It articulates an important concern regarding the internal health of Aboriginal communities and the health of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and governments in Canada.

If society is a body, then the analogy between society and the body must extend beyond the simple imagery. And this is so. A body is made up of bones, blood and organs. A social body must also have body parts and ways of relating those parts between one another. A body incarnates, depending upon one's world view, both the mind and the body, or the mind/body/spirit. A social body also incarnates a world-view regarding the relationship between the physical, the spiritual and the emotional realms of existence. Under this metaphor, given that a body can become injured, ill, lose a part to an accident or become out of balance, so can a social body. A wound can be accidental, self-inflicted or purposeful. An illness can come from without and within which means in a social body, an illness can come from outside the community and it can come from within. As

the social body functions similarly to the physical body, healing practices involve locating the causes, mechanisms and solutions to malaise and illness.

How one deploys the extended metaphor will have an impact on whom or what gets defined as ill. Or conversely, whom or what is considered ill defines who requires healing and the nature of that intervention. If the social body has an illness, it is interesting to note whether the illness is figured as that of the whole or of one of its parts. If it is a part of the body that is unwell, how does it get discussed? What are the implications of figuring one's community or another's in terms related to illness and dysfunction? If society is a body, then are the various communities within that society connected to one another by anything, like blood and nerves connect the physical body? The communities (organs) of the society (body) organised around a structural element (skeleton)? Are some communities (body parts) more important or powerful than others? What is the relationship between the various parts? Is it harmonious or is there an attack from within or a desire to take up excessive space to the detriment of another? The healing metaphor raises these and many other questions.

It is no wonder; there are often serious political commitments associated with metaphors. This is why scholars argue over where the problem lies when discussing Aboriginal communities. For many years and even today, many studies simply foster the impression that Aboriginal people and societies are sick. This has led many contemporary (Aboriginal) scholars and activists to engage in critical work regarding the politics and scholarship on Aboriginal issues in Canada (Plouffe, 2002; McCabe, 2004; Smye: 2004). Even those who situate the undeniable social problems within the context of past and present colonial laws and policies, not as an innate weakness of Aboriginal cultures, may

underestimate the power of the metaphor to shape our perceptions. They might even contribute inadvertently to the larger narrative that Aboriginal people are ill. How? Without noticing, they take up the ‘body is society’ metaphor and considering how it operates more widely in discourse. By taking up the sickness metaphor in a way that places the emphasis on who is sick and requires “treatment” on Aboriginal people, even if it happens at an unconscious level, scholars may contribute to the wider discourse according to which Aboriginal societies are fundamentally dysfunctional. Interpreting the text of healing is a contribution to the wider project of redefining the relationship of scholarship to Aboriginal issues.

How a problem is circumscribed and defined tells us a lot about the construction of disease and illness. To give this discussion a more concrete bite, consider the following argument about the effect of residential schools. Generally, Aboriginal people with symptoms similar to those of post-traumatic stress disorder are diagnosed as having the residential school syndrome (Brasfield, 2001). There is an alternate way of defining the problem that changes the perspective regarding who is ill. Consider Chrisjohn and Young’s definition of the residential school syndrome paraphrased in Plouffe (2004: 33). The:

residential school syndrome is a personality disorder that is manifested in individuals of the dominant culture and results in the specific behavior(al) action of obliterating another people’s way of life. These individuals take First Nation children away and raise them without regard for their heritage. At the same time, they help themselves to the property of the target group.

In this reframing of residential school syndrome it is the non-Aboriginal who showed symptoms of illness, not Aboriginal people. The distinction regarding where the problem or pathology may lie is important for it guides us as to which population, if any, requires the ministrations of the state and of society at large. The type of pathology or illness that is identified has a tremendous impact upon discussions of policy and legislation and even how the public receives and reacts to the healing/pathology discourse. This is why the study of metaphor construction and deployment is so important because we learn about shared and contested commitments circulating in the language of deliberation. Professor of psychiatry, Laurence Kirmayer identified systems of thought that influence where cultures locate illness. There are internalizing and externalizing systems (Kirmayer, 2004: 35). In the first instance, something inside the person must be neutralized, destroyed or removed; or else something must be added or something unblocked (ibid). In the second, the “origins and resolution of affliction” are found in social and spiritual relationships (ibid: 36). Taken at the level of the social body, ideas regarding healing of social problems tend to follow the same model.

In the case of the Commission, the report clearly identifies both methods of individual illness recognition and extends it to the larger body. In the case of the RCAP, who and what is defined as ill is important. The RCAP report explicitly states its perspective:

The analysis we present and the avenues of reconciliation we propose in this and the other four volumes of our report do not attempt to resolve the so-called ‘Aboriginal’ problem. Identifying it as an Aboriginal problem inevitably places the onus on Aboriginal people to desist from ‘troublesome behaviour’. It is an

assimilationist approach, the kind that has been attempted repeatedly in the past, seeking to eradicate Aboriginal language, culture and political institutions from the face of Canada and to absorb Aboriginal people into the body politic — so that there are no discernible Aboriginal people and thus, no Aboriginal problem. (RCAP, 1996).

There is no ‘Aboriginal’ problem per se. The problem is a Canadian one, one in which everyone is called upon to address. While the Commission clearly states that the problem does not belong to Aboriginal people, it does take a two-pronged approach throughout its report. It refers to dysfunctions within the Aboriginal social body and to the relationship between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal social bodies. By framing healing at two levels, the RCAP bridges a divide about who is ill by framing the dysfunctions of Aboriginal communities as a result of colonial and racist policies. Unlike Upjohn and Young, they are not debating whether the dysfunction or the illness lies in Canadian society or Aboriginal societies. Instead, they simply recognise that Aboriginal communities are in fact dysfunctional but that this is a result of colonial and racist policies and legislation. Thus the potential for healing lies in the ability for Aboriginal peoples to address their problems and in non-Aboriginal Canadians’ ability to acknowledge, not only the past but the errors that were made in the past. There is an important tension that is maintained throughout the document between the responsibility Aboriginal communities have in re-constituting their communities and the need for Canadian governments to give up control over Aboriginal people.

This appears to be part of the commitments associated with the healing discourse. Regularly, the Commission writes of self-government as a goal yet it is often associated

with the conviction that it must be accompanied by healing within Aboriginal communities. There is an attempt at striking a balance of responsibility between the actions to be undertaken by the governments of Canada and by Aboriginal peoples themselves: Aboriginal people's "capacity to achieve a balance between protecting individuals and respecting family autonomy, and their effectiveness in promoting family healing, will be critical tests of the success of self-government" (RCAP, 1996: 12). Both self-government and family healing are goals. In another part of the text, the Commission quotes the New Brunswick Aboriginal People's Council who claim that an exclusive land base is a "prerequisite to economic self-sufficiency and cultural healing" (ibid: 8). Aboriginal ways of knowing will be discussed in the fourth section, so suffice it to mention for now that presenting a fundamental connection between healing and self-sufficiency is consistent throughout the text (and the hearings). The link could not be made more explicitly in the following statement: "The possibility of an enhanced role for traditional medicine and healing has special significance in relation to Aboriginal self-determination" (ibid: 9). They are referring both to recovering traditional ways of knowing and obtaining control over their lives as ways to achieve healing. Ultimately, in the RCAP report, both Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian peoples are figured as dysfunctional because the present relationship creates a dysfunction between and among the various communities involved. The commitment associated with the report is that all parties need to adjust. It is not only up to the Aboriginal part of the social body that needs to change. In fact, for the relationship to be restored, the entire social body needs to heal as a whole.

In this section, I have shown how the healing metaphor falls within a larger body metaphor that has an influence upon how we engage in politics, the problems we identify and the solutions we put in place. With the body metaphor, who or what is ill has implications. Choosing to describe social relations in terms of the body metaphor also has implications. Before discussing how this choice of metaphor by the RCAP created the conditions for dialogue, I will now address metaphor studies more fully. Metaphors have and continue to be the object of scholars' critique. In order to address the metaphor of healing, I feel I must first discuss the role of metaphor in politics.

Metaphor Studies: A History of Mistrust

I have begun to clarify that metaphors have a particular function in public discourse and that the choice of metaphor guides the direction of deliberation. I have yet to show how this works. Thus to illustrate, consider this analysis of the metaphor of healing and its role in South Africa's transition from Apartheid to democracy. Cultural theorist, Giuliana Lund defines healing as a metaphor that falls within a health paradigm (2004). Lund argues that healing frames discussions and outcomes in particular ways. She suggests that as a health metaphor, there are particular dangers in applying it to a political context in which national identity and democracy have to be established between people who had been living in a semi-police state with rampant and serious human rights crimes.

Lund explains that Apartheid was figured by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a plague, placing it squarely in the realm of a rhetoric of disease. According to her, "Apartheid is a plague" is a metaphor, a health metaphor. The disease, the plague, was highly infectious, affecting people across wealth and racial borders; it

struck people indiscriminately. In analysing the associations with that particular metaphor, she concludes that it lead to particular ways of speaking about Apartheid to which she objects. For example, if Apartheid was a plague, and if the plague can be caught by anyone then Apartheid potentially affected all South Africans equally, regardless of colour and privilege. Lund is fundamentally disconcerted by the possibility that the language chosen may minimise the humiliating experience of blacks who clearly suffered more than whites during the Apartheid regime and instead promote a discussion of how the sickness infected the whole society. In addition, she points out that no one could place responsibility for the spread of the plague on a particular individual, group of individuals or governing body. As such, the metaphor implies that no one was responsible for Apartheid which, according to Lund, dangerously undermines the idea that people should be held accountable for their actions.

Lund demonstrates how the framing of a racist regime in a particular language leads to a particular way of identifying the solutions, focussed more on confession, amnesty and national reconstruction than on punishment. A Commission that takes up a healing metaphor may end up distracting the Commission from its “juridical purpose” of restoring human rights and the law in favour of building a mobilising national identity (ibid: 105). She holds that the latter goal sacrificed the former. Moreover, in South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission with its emphasis on healing took on particularly religious overtones, undermining according to Lund, a fundamental value of modern democracies, that of the separation between Church and State (ibid: 103-105). Moreover, the language of Christianity such as healing dominated to the point of excluding indigenous religious practices and therefore, according to Lund, perpetuated

the colonial history of South Africa. Regardless of whether or not one agrees with Lund in her analysis of the South African Commission, she shows how metaphors do far more than simply add ornamental language to talk. Metaphors can in fact frame a discussion in ways that influence outcomes.

Lund's work has much in common with an important number of scholars of rhetoric and critical studies. Suspicious of metaphors; some scholars seek to uncover the restrictive nature of metaphors in public affairs in order to unmask the ideological or negative effects of metaphor usage on progressive politics. The language used to describe the purposes of the texts speaks to this objective. For example, Sandra Young, writing of the healing metaphor, states "it is important to examine more carefully the normative directives *lurking* behind the language of religion, psychology, and nation-building (my emphasis, Young, 2004: 146). These ideological commitments or constraints are often figured as threatening and obscuring the truth. She writes of *obscured* political interests (emphasis mine, *ibid*) when referring to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She, like many others, appears invested in a truth finding mission that seeks to reveal the unsaid, the manipulative and the ideological. Likewise, highly concerned about the negative impacts of metaphors on progressive politics, many scholars attend to the deadening, manipulative and restrictive aspect of metaphor deployment in public affairs.

Mistrust in metaphor and decorative language dates back to Aristotle. Like many thinkers that follow him, he had ambivalent thoughts about metaphor. While he believed that metaphor belonged in the realm of poetry because of its decorous nature, he also recognised that those who could effectively wield the metaphor were very powerful. Because metaphors could foster the creation of new associations by bringing two

unexpected ideas together, they were particularly creative and powerful tools (Aristotle). Aristotle argued that metaphors were often deployed when existing terms were unable to portray an idea (ibid). Mostly however, Aristotle revealed his ambivalence when saying that “The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor” while wishing people kept its use to poetry, not logic and rhetoric. He believed on the one hand, that being a master of metaphor was a great thing and on the other, it should not be used in logic or rhetoric. Max Black sums up Aristotle’s perspective with the phrase: “Metaphors are no arguments” (Black, 1962). Ultimately, Aristotle was concerned that metaphors would replace proper arguments which, in turn, would undermine politics. He was comfortable with their use in poetry for it was the nature of poetry to provoke imaginative thinking but that in politics they may function as a distraction from the real issues.

In contrast to Aristotle’s mistrust of the metaphor, the Romantic poets saw metaphor as a way to enlarge the “circumference of the imagination” by means of a new combination of thoughts (Shelley in Wright, 1970). Metaphors were seen as a vital function of the faculty of imagination. Here rhetoric and poetry were not divided into separate categories but understood to be part of one whole language. Myths, legends, metaphors were not seen as lies and manipulations but as a means of expression. Metaphor was a way of experiencing the facts because metaphors were understood as an imaginative projection of the truth. This was a time when rhetoric with its concern for aesthetics in the expression of content was struggling to find its place among other thinkers clearly aligned with Aristotelian thought.

More recently, authors have aimed to show the negative effects of metaphor and how metaphors influence and structure policy, social attitudes and cultural norms (see

Carpenter, 1990; Ivie, 1982). Scholars of metaphor have suggested in the last number of years that what requires study is not that metaphors have ideological consequences but to show *how* metaphors operate ideologically (Billig and Macmillan, 2005; El Refaie, 2001, Hayden, 2003). Some study the deadening effect of metaphors that dull our attention and make us more vulnerable to political ideologies. They point out that political metaphors that no longer attract our attention because their meaning has become literal tend to deaden people's awareness of the political and social implications that accompany them. For a number of scholars, the role of the critic is to reveal the ideological function of metaphors as a way to oppose attempts at manipulation.

In an article drawing upon Lakoff and Johnson's work on conceptual metaphors, Elisabeth El Refaie shows how certain metaphors come to exclude immigrant and refugee populations in Europe. Her focus is on the naturalisation of metaphors. Once naturalised, she is worried that metaphors become unnoticeable to the extent that their accompanying commitments pass in the mind of the audience unawares. She concludes that conceptual metaphors must be discussed in light of the social, political and historical circumstances in which they circulate so that one can evaluate how a metaphor becomes naturalised (ibid: 363). The inside/outside metaphors become a way of noting who is and is not included in a group. Because they are so familiar they go unnoticed possibly reinforcing the exclusionary consequences of the metaphorical choice. This concern about the power of metaphors to manipulate or dull critical thought is central to theorising on metaphor in rhetorical and critical studies.

For their part, Michael Billig and Katie Macmillan write about how it is important to trace a metaphor or idiom usage over time. A diachronic analysis will make the

ideological attachments associated with a metaphor more apparent and will show how they actually shape the usage of the metaphor and influence public policy. It is a question of situating how shifts occur in the usage. They have found that it is true that a deadening of a metaphor may in fact dull people's awareness of the ideology operating in metaphorical usage. They came to another conclusion however and that is that the dulled metaphor may also "dull the literal meaning to the point of ideological concealment" (2005: 478). The worry applies to both the literal and the metaphorical spheres. Metaphors can conceal either because they become naturalised or their naturalisation makes literal talk more difficult to comprehend once we have become accustomed to the metaphorical meaning.

This concern about manipulation is not simply a common orientation of critical, cultural and rhetorical theorists, but is compounded by the theories of metaphor developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Among the most important contributions to scholarship about metaphors in the last thirty years, this work showed how metaphors structure not only our language but our ways of thinking and perceiving the world. Much of this work demonstrates how 'reality' is a product of language and the role metaphor plays in this construction. Their work suggests that not only can metaphors shape how we see and understand things (and vice versa), but that our language systems reflect our relationship to time, objects and space. They argue that to understand the orientations and values of a culture, one should examine the conceptual metaphors embedded in their language, for they orient us to the good, to what is valued and by consequence what is considered to be bad and less valued. For example, 'up is good'; 'down is bad', there we say "I'm feeling down today", or "I'm moving up the company ladder". Another value is

that money is important; this translates into how we talk about time. We say “time is money” or “I have no time to spend on that today.” They also pointed out how our relationship to deliberation is defined by aggressive metaphors. Political debates are framed by journalists as a boxing match or in terms of the language of war. This orientation differs to one in which for example debate is figured as a dance. As a result they not only reveal our values, they shape them. The type of reasoning is worrisome because it rightly suggests that we are often unaware of what influences our ways of thinking and our values for these metaphors generally go unnoticed. What ends up being moral commitments are naturalised. This is a fundamentally disconcerting idea, one that shows how metaphors in fact influence surreptitiously the way we think. Their overwhelming presence structures the way we think starting with our first attempts at language. This way of perceiving might make people feel particularly vulnerable to the manipulations of language, which in turn has led to a particular emphasis on the negative effects of metaphor deployment in research.

This mistrust in metaphor seeps through much of the writing on metaphor. And I have not even mentioned what political scientists might write of metaphor in public affairs, for they might dismiss them entirely in favour of studying institutions and power dynamics. Without denying that certain metaphors, deployed in certain circumstances, can dilute controversial propositions in a way that weakens the democratic fabric, I intend to show instead how metaphors can foster dialogue and offer a challenge to mainstream philosophies. If we want to understand how language can function as a liberating, bridge-building tool for civic participation and radical change, then we cannot only study what constrains this possibility. We must learn about how language contributes to improving

the polis. Despite the misgivings expressed by so many scholars regarding its role in obscuring reality or debate, I remain convinced that metaphors need to be studied in order to locate their generative, positive potential. Jonathan Charteris-Black argues that metaphors act as a bridge between emotion and conscious knowledge, and that they can offer insight into how ideology is operating (2005). If it is true that metaphors can act as a bridge, (to pursue his metaphor) then the path over a bridge can go both ways. It can be used to denigrate democracy or to manipulate people but it can also reinforce democracy and social justice. Metaphor studies can offer ways in which metaphors can be used in the service of positive outcomes. This is what I intend to investigate.

Fostering dialogue: The metaphor of healing

The metaphor of healing made it possible for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians to sense that they understood each other enough to engage in dialogue. By dialogue, I don't mean a literal moment when millions of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians sat down to enter into a formal exchange. I prefer to think of this exchange as taking the form of what Thomas Farrell called "conscious awareness of each other's placement in the symbolic landscape of prospective thought and decision" (Farrell, 1993: 283). This awareness makes it possible for individuals and groups to refer to other people's experiences, ideas and perspectives without ever having spoken to them. The Commission provided a forum for such an awareness to occur. The actual metaphor also created a sense of shared appearances. It was also Farrell who wrote of appearances. He suggests that appearances are the most immediate ways by which we can engage with one another in order to enter into the world of rhetoric, in which deliberation can begin (ibid: 278). In order for the engagement to begin, these appearances must call upon a degree of

familiarity across different locales. In the case of the RCAP, the creation of shared appearances was made possible for a variety of reasons. First, the structural aspect of the Commission ensured a degree of legitimacy and media coverage that meant that its hearings and recommendations would reach the eyes and ears of Canadians. A sense of commonality cannot occur without knowledge of one another. The Commission afforded Aboriginal people with the possibility of addressing their past and their present in a public manner. This often took the form of narrative, narrative about pain and recovery. Canadians could begin to develop a sense of shared appearances because they began to learn about Aboriginal people's history. Second, metaphors in public talk offer a bridge between conscious and unconscious thought. The metaphor of healing and the language of pain create associations with emotions that affect how people perceive and feel about an issue. Emotions in public talk can foster a greater degree of openness because of its capacity to engage people in their common humanity. The metaphor of healing provided an entry into the world of emotions. Third, while the meaning associated by Aboriginal people with the term healing was not the same as that of the majority of Canadians, it still meant enough for interested observers to develop a sense that they were thinking of the same thing, creating a sense of shared understanding. This created a certain degree of familiarity with healing's different commitments. The metaphor was associated with a multiplicity of references and meanings making it possible for non-Aboriginal people to believe that they understood the pain and language of Aboriginal people, and fostering among Aboriginal people the feeling that their experience was acknowledged. These three elements constituted the conditions upon which dialogue could begin.

The conversation began with the RCAP inviting people across Canada to participate in public hearings during which witnesses could discuss the past and present difficulties and make suggestions as to the future. The structured nature of the hearings did not stop many presenters or witnesses from speaking in line with the oral tradition of Aboriginal cultures. In this narrative form, many Aboriginal took advantage of this public forum to recount some of the pain they experienced as a result of Canada's past and present policies regarding Aboriginal people. One of the central features of the statements made by Aboriginal witnesses included the telling of abuse and cultural loss due to residential schools, out-adoption programs that sent Aboriginal children into non-Aboriginal homes, the Indian Act, etc. For the first time in Canadian history, Aboriginal people were telling their stories to a Canadian public. Largely reported in print and electronic media (Hurley and Wherett, 1999), Canadians heard regular and consistent testimony of pain. Hansotte reminds us that for dialogue between groups to occur, the experiences of the members of each group has to be introduced to the others (Hansotte, 2002: 132). The experiences of non-Aboriginal Canadians and their history are part of the mainstream narrative, but those of Aboriginal people were largely unknown. The hearings and the report provided a framework in which those experiences could be told. The danger in public talk about suffering is that the experience may be framed as an unfortunate, but private issue or as a sensationalist public presentation of the self that further marginalises the speakers for it might leave out the context and the structures causing the suffering. This is not what occurred during the Commission.

The narratives of this commission functioned differently because of the very political forum in which they were told. The structure of the event did not turn the

hearings into a soap opera. Instead they provided a socio-political forum in which pain and experiences were contextualised. Witnesses chose to speak in different ways, some in the form of stories, others in the form of more formal presentations. Together they performed a retelling of history and pain within the historical and political contexts of Canada and its development. This kind of telling of the self and one's community can be extremely productive and can contribute to the health of democracy by: mediating between past and present events that are part of different traditions; desegregating public opinion through an evaluation of the action to be undertaken; ensuring processes by which harm is repaired through mutual recognition (my translation, *ibid*: 133). Taylor proposes a dialogic process of mutual recognition whereby each group must take into account "the self-understandings of the culture in question" (*ibid*, 528) that force each group to articulate their assumptions (*ibid*, 529). This process implies an eventual re-articulation and a re-cognition of the original self. It also involves overcoming distorted perceptions of the other. In the public arena, recognition affords people a sense of dignity by recognising their "universal status as moral agents" (Taylor in Schaap, 2004: 525). The Commission did not begin its work with the idea that mutual recognition had already been established. Mutual recognition was the goal and one way to pursue that goal came in the form of narratives of pain.¹⁰ To begin to transform the narrative, the act of telling requires an audience; the act of listening requires a teller. The act of telling and of listening form a democratic pact because the goal is not just to tell and to listen but to begin to dialogue about the next step of the story (Hansotte, 2002: 135). These stories are always circulating, with some people listening and others not. Holocaust researcher, Dori

¹⁰ The report is careful not to suggest a fixed, universal self or collectivity that seeks recognition. The idea here is not to recognise a frozen statue of Aboriginality but to recognise Aboriginal peoples in their Aboriginality that of course shifts and changes in time and place.

Laub, argues that testimony actually depends upon “an other to which one could say ‘Thou’ in the hope of being heard, of being recognized as a subject, of being answered... But when one cannot turn to a ‘you’ one cannot say ‘thou’ even to oneself” (cited in Young, 2004: 153). The RCAP offered a formal forum in which these stories could be told, circulated and heard. It made it possible for Aboriginal people to “return to language and to self-identification” (Young, *ibid*).

Once told and heard, what happens? What happens for dialogue to occur? Of course, it is impossible to say what leads to dialogue in all situations, but the telling of stories that involved healing and pain was a powerful way to engage with the public. The link between pain and metaphors has been made by linguist and scholar of public communication, Charteris-Black. He argues that it is metaphor that provides a bridge between the conscious and unconscious by “transferring positive and negative associations of various source words to a metaphor target” (Charteris-Black, 2005: 13). Metaphors speak to us at the level of the unconscious, calling upon our emotions. Associating the experiences of Aboriginal peoples with pain and the language of healing creates two associations. The first involves a negative association with the suffering experienced by Aboriginal people in the past (and possibly the present). Taylor argues that modern peoples, of which we are a part, have a low level of tolerance to suffering. He suggests that one of the features of the modern self is to abhor pain especially that considered unnecessary (1989). If this is true, hearing about residential school abuse, the dislocation of families, alcohol and addiction problems, etc. meant hearing about the senseless pain of Aboriginal people. Sensitive to this pain, Canadians would have become more open to hearing about solutions. This leads us to the second association involving

the term healing. It draws upon positive emotions regarding wellness and recovery, goals with which everyone can agree. Healing has positive connotations. Because healing could potentially lessen the existence of pain to which Canadians had been sensitized, it also became a mobilising tool. Emotional appeals seek out associations of which we are not necessarily conscious which is why politicians mobilise them so frequently. It is also why they are powerful and significant tools for public communication in general. According to Young, “Catharsis is generated in the moment of acknowledging pain” (2004:155). And that one’s own humanity is affirmed when one is able to bear witness to the pain of others. Young argues that solidarity in pain is what creates a bridge between the suffering and the audience. My suggestion is that solidarity arises, or the ‘we’ begins in the RCAP context when the healing potential becomes visible, because the metaphor was able to join the conscious and the unconscious, the pain and the hope into a word that represented something meaningful for all. The metaphor of healing has a little something for everyone. This makes dialogue possible because of the creation of a sort of common ground that speaks to the emotions instead of the intellect.

Concerned that I’m portraying the Canadian public as ready to embrace its colonial past and present role in the marginalisation of Aboriginal communities, I would like to clarify one aspect of this last paragraph. Firstly, Canadians were potentially more open to hearing about Aboriginal people’s lives and past experience. This does not mean that they were ready to address our colonial past and present in terms of justice or as something that belonged to Canadians as much as Aboriginal people. Secondly, one does not simply become willing to hear the pain of the other simply because the narrative is powerful or that the Commission provided an appropriate setting. Other factors may

influence how one hears an other's narrative. It might very well be the case that Canadians were equally influenced by feelings of guilt associated with the colonial past. This feeling might make it more likely that they listened to the testimony and the report differently than it would have in the absence of guilt. Researchers found that majority collective guilt over the historical treatment of Aboriginal Australians fosters a positive attitude to compensation and reparations for Aboriginal people (Reid, Gunter and Smith, 2005). In the Canadian context, collective majority guilt about the past may also foster a way of listening that makes hearing about pain a way of alleviating some of that guilt. In the context of minority / majority relations, Commissioners had an exigence to find a way to speak to non-Aboriginal Canadians who formed 97% of the population. Healing was it. Calls for change from a minority group can occur through demonstrations (Oka is an example), through the court system; through lobbying and in this case through shifts in understanding and perceptions. Nevertheless, it did create common appearances of shared meaning.

The dialogue could occur because the choice of metaphor carried with it sufficient common meanings for different worlds to meet. According to Philip Eubanks, metaphors are rhetorically constituted. This means that the meaning of the metaphor is not only situated in the political context of its usage; it means that the metaphor finds meaning only in and through its usage. In this way, he argues that:

Metaphors are always inflected. No metaphor can be uttered except by someone whose language is shaped by political, philosophical, economic, social, professional, and personal commitments. These commitments constrain what a competent utterer's metaphor can mean. Conversely, because most of the time an

utterer's commitments are roughly known, the way a metaphor is likely to be taken up is guided by this knowledge (Eubanks, 1999: 194).

This reinforces the idea that one needs to know how and by whom the metaphor has been deployed and in what political circumstances the metaphor is deployed in order to grasp how it operates. To illustrate, Max Black writes that the metaphor "Man is a wolf" has a universal meaning. According to him, we associate wolf with certain qualities of a predator and this perception interacts with our idea of man. When they are brought together, saying man is a wolf means that man is a predator as is a wolf. Eubanks points out that one needs to be careful not to assume a universal meaning of the metaphor for the meaning is constituted by the context and is not found in the words themselves. We need to know in what context and with whom the speaker made the association. Taken in another context, regarding the survival of an endangered species for example, the metaphor "man is a wolf" might serve as an appeal to create a parallel between the survival of man and the wolf (Eubanks, 1999). Based on this example, metaphors clearly circulate in more than one context, which means that more than one interpretation is possible and that to understand a metaphor it must be situated in the context of the hearer, the speaker and the event. The interpretation operates through a contextualised filter aided by one's familiarity with certain associations with the metaphor and the salience of those associations.

Metaphors have often been interpreted as though they had single meanings. This is a problem. Interpreting Josef Stern's work on metaphor, rhetorician Celeste Condit and her co-authors argue that "when words are brought together in a metaphoric fashion, a variety of different meanings are available from the historically conditioned uses of each

of the words” (2002: 304). To understand what is meant, an interpreter must gather together what they already know about the words constituting the metaphor. When two terms are brought together metaphorically, “the interpreter must seek to understand the presuppositions embedded in the context that help select the primary or appropriate meaning” (ibid; 305). This may lead to multiple interpretations. Condit et al argue that theories implying a single meaning to metaphors fail to offer explanatory possibilities for alternate reactions. Instead they argue for a theory that accounts for multiple meanings and further that specific aspects of metaphors are best understood as part of a dynamic process of production and filtration of meaning (2002).

My assumption was that numerous usages of healing were already in circulation in Canada, prior to the RCAP. In order to verify this assumption, I gleaned a random sample of Canadian newspapers in English for the term healing or heal in order to learn about how it was circulating just prior to the Royal Commission’s work. In a dozen articles appearing in 1990 and 1991 in newspaper articles in Vancouver, Ottawa, Windsor, Edmonton, Calgary, Montreal, Toronto and Halifax, the usages give rise to a number of meanings. In the most straightforward cases, the term referred to a bodily injury requiring medical care (Gallagher, 1991; Hall, 1990; Rodrigue, 1991). In another set of articles, the reference to healing refers more to mental health. They consist mostly of references to a psychological wound that requires healing (Ottawa Citizen,, 1990; Young, 1990; Wind, 1991; Barron, 1991) or in one case as a spiritual issue in which peace of mind as seen as the result of healing (Maloney, 1990). In a rather unique situation, one author wrote of healing poverty and other misfortunes (Leclerc, 1991). In this case, the metaphor extends to the “social ills” of society. This usage affords a

meaning that pulls one away from the individual and private realms into one that is public and collective as in the 'society is a body' metaphor.

In the final three articles, the terms heal and healing are used in discussions of Aboriginal issues (The Vancouver Sun, 1990; The Daily News, 1991; Lewis and Mayhew, 1991). In reference to the damage caused by colonialism to Native communities in Canada and the United States, one native leader declared that governments had an obligation to apologize and not celebrate the arrival of Columbus to the Americas in order that Indigenous peoples could "heal the damage that has been done" by colonialism (Daily News, 1991). In another article about a Mohawk participant in the Oka crisis who was reported to have been arrested, the reference to healing was difficult to understand. The man was said to have been helpful in the "healing process" during tense moments of the standoff and negotiations between Mohawks and government representatives (Vancouver Sun, 1990). It is unclear exactly what is meant by the term healing in this case but it does have something to do with the relationship among Mohawks and their relationship to the police. Once again, the word healing refers not to individual bodily wellness but acts as a relational term. In one case, the term 'healing' is set in quotations which according to El Refaie indicates that it has a metaphorical function (El Refaie, 2001) or that distance is being created between the author and the term. It was used alongside the word 'lodge' to draw attention to the fact that the 'healing lodge' would not be a physical lodge but a metaphorical one that would serve to house native inmates of a female prison. No mention is made as to the goals of the 'healing lodge' but one is led to assume that there is a mental health component because of the associations we make with healing's use in the past (Josef Stern in Condit et al, 2002). In contrast to a prison, a

lodge in the Canadian context is associated as a place in the wilderness in which one finds peace and tranquility while for some Aboriginal people it refers to a family of native people or to a wigwam (an Abenaki word for a meeting place or hut). Referring to alternative justice in this way means that Canadians, depending upon where they are culturally situated, will interpret the use of the word lodge differently.

If one follows Condit et al's concern for a polysemic understanding of metaphors, one must consider not only the multiple meanings of a metaphor but the associations made with one or other of the words of the metaphor (2002). They argue that theories implying a single meaning to metaphors fail to offer explanatory possibilities for alternate reactions. According to these newspaper articles, the healing fits within a body metaphor and finds usage in health, in psychology and in relational settings. In these articles, Aboriginality has already been associated with healing, albeit in unclear ways. Because the latter metaphorical usage has not been completely absorbed by common usage, it is occasionally expressed in parentheses as a way to mark its figurative elements. This small collection of uses of the term healing in Canada demonstrates how it is used differently depending upon the context. As such, one cannot assume the unity of commitments and interpretations.

More importantly, this polysemic context makes it possible for people with a variety of references, some similar, others dissimilar, to communicate and possibly develop a sense of shared commitments (at best) or more pragmatically, shared appearances. The context of the RCAP in Canada meant that enough similarities existed in usages between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people so that public conversations could occur on this theme. At the time the RCAP report was released, Canadians were

familiar with self-help and psychological, biomedical, Christian and Aboriginal ways of referring to healing. The presence of a variety of discourses made it possible for people with a variety of influences to feel as though they were speaking of the same issue. This feeling, I suggest, is what fostered the grounds of communication or dialogue.

To sum up, in this section, I have demonstrated that metaphors can create the possibility of dialogue by drawing upon sufficient common meanings and by drawing upon emotions that both foster the sense of the “we”. The “we” is fragile, not only because of the majority/minority relations, or of the colonial history, but also because of the limited commonality of the meanings of healing. The potential of the RCAP lies in this tension between the fragile and creative possibilities lying in the cracks between various meanings of healing. I have shown how emotions can create shared appearances. I would like now to turn to the complexity and creativity of multiple interpretations of metaphor. Ultimately, I want to show that the radical potential of the RCAP lies in the fact that the world views associated with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal commitments to healing and the body metaphor differ. In contrast to the traditional Euro-Western view of the body metaphor, the one associated with Aboriginal world views provides a far more progressive, dynamic and challenging vision of how to organise society. As such, it stands as a critique of a way of operating that they seek to transform.

Healing's Radical Potential

Kenneth Burke wrote that metaphors provide “perspective by incongruity.” Burke holds that the metaphor opens up a potential for creativity and generates something new

because of the tension lying between the topic¹¹ and the vehicle used to describe it. By topic, in this case, I mean ‘society’ and by vehicle I mean the ‘body’ (which is implied) as a way to be able to discuss healing. This particular metaphor does not offer much incongruity. What does offer a generative form of incongruity is the fact that the usage of the RCAP on healing has a very different perspective about the body than that generally circulating in the Euro-Canadian context. The question becomes less about what incongruity lies within the metaphor (because this would ignore the idea that meaning is constituted in contexts). The question is: What incongruity lies in the context that gives this metaphor its creative and productive potential? I suggest that the productive elements only became possible once this apparently unnoticeable metaphor is taken up in ways that challenge the Euro-Canadian¹² use of the ‘society is a body metaphor’. The term healing, deployed in a context of Aboriginality, is what makes this challenge possible. In this section, I will discuss the history of the body metaphor in Euro-Canadian thought and compare it with that of Aboriginal cultures. This comparison will allow me to show how the vision associated with healing, as presented by the RCAP process (hearings, report, research), stands in contrast with a Euro-Canadian conception of how to live together. This has implications on what steps should or should not be taken regarding the restoration of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

It is intriguing that scholars have paid little attention to the fact that metaphors could be interpreted in multifarious ways. This has led to analyses in which authors

¹¹ Coined by I.A. Richards in 1936, the common word for this is tenor, but the word topic has begun to replace it for it is easier to understand.

¹² I have used the term Euro-Canadian to describe a phenomenon that is becoming more and more difficult and even questionable to name. Many scholars refer to Western philosophy but the cohabitation between peoples of the East and West and North and South has challenged both the content of that philosophy and the relevance of describing it in geographical terms. In using the term Euro-Western, I am trying to find a way to refer to the dominant cultural reality of Europe and North America as influenced by European thought and traditions, without denying the complexity of Western reality today.

develop a particular interpretation without situating it in a particular political culture and time. More importantly however, even when this took place, many failed to note that the metaphor even within a particular culture and time could be interpreted differently. For example, in her monograph, *Control and Consolation in American Culture and Politics: Rhetorics of Therapy* (1998), Dana Cloud suggests that social body metaphors are fundamentally conservative for they posit a unitary (organic) whole to which society must return in order to find to find balance. She also argues that the social body metaphor implies the privatisation of social problems in that solutions to problems that are political in origin are said to be found in the individual, not the collectivity. The individual in question is figured by the metaphor as a self-contained unit that does not come into being in relationship to family and society. Ultimately, this language undermines collective action for it “encourages citizens to perceive political issues, conflicts and inequities as personal failures subject to personal amelioration” (ibid: 3).

This argument makes a degree of sense when the social body metaphor is examined in the light of the tradition of Western thought. David George Hale (1971), in his work on the *The Body Politic: A Political Metaphor in Renaissance English Literature*, details usages of this metaphor from Aristotle through St-Paul, the medieval era with John of Salisbury and onto the Elizabethan thinkers. He shows how the metaphor draws upon two ways of comprehending the body. The first involves a vision of the body with specific roles for body parts and with unifying mechanisms that structure or favour the relationship between parts; offering a functional view of society. This led to description of the body in terms of the nobility as the head, the clergy as the heart and the commons as the arms and legs that obey the head (Hale, 1971: 15). The

second refers to the four elements or humours (earth, water, air, fire). In Ancient Greece, to stay healthy, humans had to maintain their humours in proper balance and conversely, imbalance was understood as the cause of disease (ibid).

Hale writes that that metaphor of the body in this view adopts the idea that each part is given a function by nature or God and that it is the nature of that part to perform this function (ibid: 21). Christianity following St-Paul brought to us the idea that all parts should be honoured even those lowly ones (ibid: 28). This bespeaks the hierarchy involved in the Western divisions afforded to different parts of the body and of society. John of Salisbury, the only known medieval English political theorist, also conceived of the metaphor as an organic hierarchy in which the nerves could be equated to laws. In writing of laws this way, he legitimised the idea that laws, like nerves, could not be changed, that they were part of the natural order (ibid: 47). With the advent of modern biology, references to the body politic tended to imply a recognition of the complexity of matter, allowing for a more dynamic understanding of the organic realm (ibid: 136). In 1971, Hale suggested that the body politic metaphor no longer held sway in political life. This thesis shows this to be false; it has simply taken on a different form.

In the contemporary period, the body metaphor finds expression in self-help and New Age literature and echoes some of the implications to which Dana Cloud directed criticism. Inger Askehave sums up this literature. New Age philosophy on which self-help books are grounded offer a secular form of esoterism accompanied by eastern philosophical rhetoric that opposes traditional western culture with its rational, positivistic paradigm. The ideology of New Age philosophy involves a sense that all things in the universe are interconnected. In this view, there is only one reality with no

separate physical and psychic reality. Modern society produces lonely and alienated individuals who become ill; treatment must focus on the whole problem and not just the manifestation of imbalance. It emphasises a holistic approach health and wellness and stands against the idea the parts stand apart from the whole. Humans are able to make life improvements but must rely on the self and not others to achieve them (Askehave, 2004).

From this perspective, references to healing tend to be very individualistic. A body metaphor that is figured in terms of healing is likely to find an echo within a wide portion of the population, which is familiar with self-help discourse. Even so, it will be comprehended in relation to the individualistic aspects of the New Age perspective. If contemporary views of the body metaphor follow this pattern, it is clear that its major function is to naturalise differences in status and role in such a way as to favour the status quo, confirming Cloud's description of the body metaphor as conservative and privatising. The problem with this functionalist model was that a person's place was decided prior to birth and was immutable. It was a particularly static vision of the social body that contained commitments to a hierarchy of roles. The examples of this perspective are numerous. The medical profession is organised into a disciplinary practice according to body parts. It has only been in recent years, that the health professions have begun to discuss health in a holistic manner. As a result of this type of thinking, treatments are planned in terms of the body part and not the whole. When poverty is referred to as a disease, as public discourse often does, the implication is that it is the result of natural processes and not the result of political choices. Cloud's interpretation clearly drew on hundreds of years of Western thought. Yet, like Condit et al, I am leery of attributing a single interpretation to a particular metaphor. This is why it

may be too soon to conclude that the discussion of healing during the RCAP was conservative.

I will return now to how the healing metaphor may be understood in Aboriginal cultures in Canada in the early to mid-1990s. To understand this interpretation, I will share my limited understanding of how the body is society metaphor finds meaning in Aboriginal cultures. What I have found is that the body is more dynamic, less conservative than the one discussed by Cloud, and therefore merits greater attention for its potential contribution to progressive politics.

Having not discovered anything written specifically on the subject of the body metaphor in Aboriginal traditions, I have turned to a variety of literatures for inspiration. I will create a patchwork that is significantly meaningful to constitute a fair interpretation of the body metaphor in Aboriginal communities in Canada. It would be presumptuous however to assume that my interpretation is the only possible one and it would be equally so to conclude that my interpretation represents fully the complexity of Aboriginal world views. I have based my conclusions on the RCAP report as well as on historical, anthropological and other ethnographic studies but my research does have limits. Marlene Brant Castellano, the former head of research for the RCAP, wrote how it is important that we recognise and seek out sources of knowledge that are appropriate to Aboriginal cultures. The oral tradition and experiential learning are two key elements in learning about Aboriginal ways of knowing. While my work reposes, in part on the oral testimony of the Commission, my research did not involve discussions, observations, interviews or participation in events with Aboriginal people. My interpretation should be understood as being my own, influenced by where I stand as a non-Aboriginal Canadian with the

limited knowledge available to me. Castellano also wrote that “Aboriginal societies make a distinction between perceptions, which are personal, and wisdom, which has social validity and can serve as a basis for common action” (Castellano, 2000: 25). At best, this interpretation may serve others in some way. At worst, the following interpretation is no more than my perception. It is also important to note that while each Aboriginal culture has evolved in particular ways, in different locales and cultural traditions, there are some fundamental elements that all have in common, enough to write of a North American intellectual tradition (RCAP, 1996).

How is the Aboriginal body figured in the North American intellectual tradition? It is to this question that I aim to answer in the following paragraphs. It is widely known that, in this tradition, the individual exists in relation to others. What is less well understood is that in an Aboriginal world view, the trees, the earth, the rivers, the animals and even stones are part of a network of relations. The individual is defined “by a web of relationships that includes not only extended family, kin and the clan but, for hunters and other people living off the land, animals, elements of the natural world, spirits and ancestors” (Kirmayer, 2004). In this perspective, “(t)he world of the human being and the world of nature and spirit are essentially reflections of each other in the shaman’s view of the cosmos” (Dufrene, 1991). “Every element of the material world is infused in some sense with spirit” and vice versa (RCAP, 1996). Plants and animals are part of the web of relations for they are seen as teachers (Simpson, 2001). Thus, when the body metaphor is used to discuss healing, it must be understood as referring not only to relations involving people but the interactions, and interdependencies that exist between the animal, mineral and spiritual worlds, which are but one in the Aboriginal intellectual tradition. The

physical and spiritual worlds “are two aspects of one reality” (McCabe, 2004: 311). The RCAP calls thinking in this mode ‘all-around vision’ where the “natural and the supernatural intertwine” and the “past, present and the future mesh in the life of an individual” (1996).

In this philosophy, the key words include holism, interconnectedness, balance, healing. Holism because all of the features of the universe are seen as a dynamic whole. Unlike the early Western tradition, this whole is neither static, nor hierarchical. Critics will say that there are dangers to positing an organic, holistic perspective. They argue that it is fundamentally conservative. Yet this philosophy allows for a more flexible model of the social body than the Western one. Contrary to the European conceptions of the metaphor, the Aboriginal usage recognises that “all of creation is in a state of constant change” that includes “the coming together of things (development) and the coming apart of things (disintegration). Both kinds of change are necessary, and are always connected to each other” (Lane, Bopp and Bopp cited in McCabe, 2004: 310). This means that unlike the nerves (laws), the social body is not defined in a permanent way. There is movement, constant movement in a healthy social body that cannot be defined in terms of a fixed way.

Aboriginal thought does not identify the body in hierarchical ways. In contrast to the European model of the social body with the head representing the leadership or the nobility, body parts are not assigned to groups of people but to qualities. Tremendous importance is placed upon the senses. In Aboriginal cultures, tremendous value is placed on eyes for their capacity to observe, on ears for their ability to hear, on the mouth for its ability for storytelling and singing. These abilities are recognised in the young and the old

and are not attributed to an elite group (RCAP, 1996). “Mother earth as a living, breathing, and knowing entity who nourishes and provides for every living thing through its own magnificent process of life” (ibid). According to an Elder of the Shawanage First Nations, quoted in report, rivers are the life blood of the society (RCAP, 1996). The social body includes the rivers. It also includes the land if one is to follow an Inuk participant in the hearings, quoted in the final report. He said, the “land is my body” (RCAP, 1996). When Aboriginal people use the social body metaphor, the implied body is actually that of the earth. This explains why so many of the myths and stories providing guidance about Aboriginal thought and values draw upon the earth for its imagery (Earth Mother, Sun Father, Sacred Twins, Mother of Game or Corn, Old Man, Trickster, Holy Wind, Tree of Life, Life’s Sake). It is not simply imagery but a representation of the Aboriginal self and culture as defined in the web of relations. Understood in terms of the metaphor of the body, the wind carries stories of the ancestors and the spirits to the ears of the people. In the oral tradition of Aboriginal peoples, language is the sacred expression of breath and can create the worlds we live in (Cajete, 2005: 70-71). Myths become a life force. Moreover words meaning to ‘breathe in’ in some languages mean to learn (ibid).

Notions of interdependence permeate the North American intellectual tradition.¹³ This implies that people have an influence upon their surroundings and vice versa. This thinking is exemplified by the idea that when the earth is sick, the people are sick (Simpson, 2001: 145). It does not suggest however that humans must follow a pre-destined path. In fact, compared to the impression that cosmic philosophies deny

¹³ I use this term, as did the Royal Commission, because it contrasts with the intellectual tradition of Westerners who tend not to recognise Aboriginal traditions and thought as forming an intellectual tradition. This is a mistaken perspective.

individual agency, the Aboriginal tradition believes in and insists upon human agency. “Human Beings can always acquire new gifts, but they must struggle to do so” (McCabe, 2004: 310). This suggests that the social body must also struggle to learn new ways of being and doing. Human beings are active participants (ibid: 312). In the holistic philosophy upon which Aboriginal traditions are built, the world is “constantly reforming, multi-dimensional, interacting cycles” with dynamic interrelationships (RCAP, 1996).

The goals of the social body, figured less as a western body with its clearly defined boundaries and more like a the multi-dimensional Aboriginal body, are to maintain a balance between the physical, the emotional, the spiritual and the intellectual branches of the self, the community and the universe. This particular vision is portrayed by the medicine wheel. The wheel refers to the cyclical nature of life with births, deaths and rebirths. The word medicine is important and should not be interpreted in terms of medication and western medicine. Guidance from an animal may be seen as medicine in the maintenance of the sacred balance between all of the elements of the natural and spiritual world. Myth, ceremony, ritual connects the spirit-world, ancestors and the past to the present and the future. As reflections of the belief in balance and wholeness, these myths and rituals express the presence of both good and bad, of possibilities and constraints. They connect and reflect connections among individuals, the natural order and the society. These myths and rituals are grounded in experience, situated in particular locations and times, inspired by the all-around perspective that has a different relationship to time than Euro-Canadian perspective.

Thus, without the mind/body/spirit split that Western philosophy acquired, the Aboriginal body should not be understood only in terms of the physical body. A more complete understanding involves the recognition that the body includes the spirits, nature and the community who contribute to constituting the whole being. When this body is taken as a metaphor for society, society must be understood to include the surround. Unlike functionalist conceptions of the social body, the Aboriginal view develops a more dynamic, non-hierarchical view of the relations between different aspects of that body: the environment (seen as an extension of the self, and not apart from the environment), the communities and the ancestors and spirits. This is why there is so much talk of interconnectedness, holism and balance.

Western philosophy has never been practiced in Western societies as it is discussed in theory; the same is true for Aboriginal philosophies. Moreover, in the case of Aboriginal thought, its enactment in practice is made more difficult in light of the lack of autonomy afforded Aboriginal communities in contemporary Canada. Despite the numerous constraints involved in establishing practices aligned with this vision, the RCAP report aims to promote this perspective. While the report focuses on both aspects of healing, that of restitution of the self and the community and that of reconciling a relationship, it does so in a way that draws upon and values traditions and ways of knowing that offer an important difference to Euro-Canadian ways of knowing. This does not mean that Aboriginal people are seeking a return to a pre-modern past. The report itself emphasises that Aboriginal people want to reconstitute their communities while fundamentally redefining how we relate together. Kirmayer writes:

Aboriginal peoples are engaged in an ongoing process of re-articulating themselves in the modern world in ways that honour their ancestors, maintain links with crucial values, and creatively respond to the exigencies of a world simultaneously woven together by electronic media and riven apart by conflicts of culture and value” (Kirmayer, 2003: S19).

This project is a wholly contemporary one.

The RCAP report offers a language in which a degree of common ground is possible. For example, the guiding term of the report was not self-government, colonialism, reparations, imperialism or other language that tends to offend mainstream listeners. It was healing and who could be against that? The testimony shows and my examples of the circulation of healing in public discourse, healing has meaning in the everyday life of Canadians. The metaphor did more than that. Metaphors elicit change because people can see other realities and other ways of being (Foss, Foss and Griffin, 1999). In contrast, I aim to show that the body metaphor is deployed differently in an Aboriginal context than in a Euro-Western context. This allows for different meanings to rub against one another in such a way as to avoid the creation of a unity and total fragmentation. In fact, given the context and sufficient commonalities in meaning, the healing language made it possible to communicate while not necessarily knowing or agreeing upon the epistemologies at the heart of that dialogue. I suggest that this is where the generative potential lies in the case of the RCAP, for healing has both common and specific meanings and connotations depending upon whether the interpreter is more influenced by, habituated to or identified with traditional Western scientific, religious, New Age, Aboriginal, psychological or other discourse communities regarding healing.

This is what the RCAP report attempts to do by drawing upon a mainstream understanding of healing, associating it with another perspective, one that seriously differs in social organisation. In this space between two meanings, there is a radical potential. This radical potential is likely to be slow and partial in its outcome but offers a powerful alternative to Euro-Canadian world view that is being challenged from different directions not least of which is due to environmental degradation.

Conclusion

Any time Aboriginal people attempt to place their concerns on the public agenda, they take a risk. The risk is that of all small minorities whose meanings, goals and values will be interpreted through the lens of the majority who tend to have a fair greater degree of influence over the tools of mediation than do Aboriginal minorities. This means that their concerns will inevitably be interpreted in light of the world-view of the majority. In this context, it makes sense that the RCAP figured its goals in a language that was appealing to non-Aboriginal people. A different language, that of collective action and resistance to Canadian laws, has also characterised the relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. In fact, this type of language is what led to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. This language can be very useful in provoking movement and change. So can a language that appears less radical. This is the language of healing. By appealing to Canadians' abhorrence of suffering, by using a non-threatening language familiar to all Canadians, Aboriginal people and the Commissioners developed a rhetorically powerful tool to engage with Canadians over an issue which has little direct import for the majority. And yet in spite of this conciliatory language, the process of the Commission figured a radical critique to Canadian society. This critique

suggests for example that this society is out of balance and that it develops unhealthy relations with the surround. Instead, the Commission offers an alternative vision. Much like the South African idea of *ubuntu*, which suggests that one's existence is wrapped up in other's existence, or that contrary to Descartes' idea that 'I think, therefore I am' the RCAP figures a society based on the interdependence of people, animals and spirits in the spirit of 'you exist, therefore I am.' This is a very different perspective than our present way of organising society and governing based on a separation of state and religion, on the autonomy of the individual and on the supremacy of human beings in the natural order. In choosing the language of healing as a way to represent the aspirations of Aboriginal people, the Commission found a way to both engage and challenge Canadian society on its own terms and on Aboriginal terms. This offers a potent lesson for how to engage in radical forms of dialogue. This does not mean abandoning protests, lobbying or other ways of deploying collective power. It just means that talk, often criticised for minimising the dynamics of power, can be productive.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

A Commission's choice of words is neither accidental nor inconsequential. Above and beyond the recommendations, the various components of a Commission – the hearings, the report, the media coverage – fashion a way of referring to an issue that has an impact upon how we define and perceive the issue at hand. If healing became the central trope of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, it is because this language created possibilities that were deemed constructive by stakeholders in the Commission. The language of healing led to ways of perceiving and refiguring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations in Canada in a particular way. Even if this process is unconscious; it is no less real. Any other choice would have framed the discussion differently. This is why the study of language as it is deployed in a given socio-political context is so important. The study of rhetoric, or situated speech intended to persuade, among its many contributions, offers a way to explore the influence of public talk on what we identify as, how we orient ourselves to and how we resolve public problems. This thesis has been about that process.

In principal, the Commission could have been about reconciliation had the RCAP chosen this word as its central term. It didn't because ultimately it couldn't. Unlike South Africa where important numbers of organised groups on both sides of the Apartheid wall experienced sufficient negative effects of the regime to motivate a desire for change, Canada's situation was different. The appreciation that one's own well-being is limited because of the maintenance of the Apartheid regime made it possible for all sides to engage in talks in South Africa. These talks reconfigured the relations between blacks, whites and coloured people and remade South African into a democratic republic. In

Canada the sense of a 'shared negativity' of the socio-political conditions involving Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations had yet to be established.

In Canada, Aboriginal people felt the pain of the past and present of colonialism while for the most part non-Aboriginal Canadians did not. Only in certain areas of the country are Canadians in regular contact with Aboriginal people. In the North, in the cities of Saskatchewan and in the small towns and cities whose limits border on reserves, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal mix on a regular basis. Otherwise, most Canadians do not know much more about Aboriginal peoples than what they see on television. More importantly, they are almost entirely unaffected by the Indian Act, the colonial history, the shortage of land on reserves, the lack of equality for women, the relations between the federal or provincial governments with band councils. The only shared negativity that tends to arise is when Aboriginal people block bridges and roads to protest. Unlike in South Africa, Canadians had not developed a sense of their own interest in creating change. Ultimately, the Commission did not choose reconciliation simply because it could not count on a feeling of 'shared negativity,' not because the goals of reconciliation were undesirable.

Instead, the Commission adopted healing as the defining term. It was 'chosen' because it provided a way to create, if not a feeling of 'shared negativity' then a feeling of 'shared responsibility' for the redefinition of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians and their governments. In chapter two, I showed how Aboriginal people engaged in a rhetorical ritual of transformation. This process made it possible for Aboriginal people to convince one another that action was required by Aboriginal people as well as by the various orders of government in order to tackle the

social, spiritual and cultural disintegration of Aboriginal communities. What was particular about this process is that those who were identified as having the most legitimate and fundamental tools to achieve healthy communities were Aboriginal people themselves. Thus the second part of the ritual of transformation included a rhetorical process by which Aboriginal people convinced one another, in an empowering process, that they held the knowledge and means to reconstitute their selves and their communities if only the governments would put an end to their colonial attitude and policies. They demonstrated that Aboriginal people had all the cultural tools, if not the economic ones, to engage in a process of transforming their communities. This demonstration is particularly important for people whose self-confidence has been undermined by assimilationist practices that misrepresent, patronise and belittle their cultures.

The Royal Commission created the opportunity for Aboriginal people across Canada to strengthen their discourse community by drawing upon common experiences and discovering common strategies. Strengthening a marginalised discourse community through public hearings had occurred prior to the RCAP. For example, the Commission on the Status of Women in the 1960s, known as the Bird Commission, had a similar effect. For the first time, in living rooms across the country, women heard other women talking about the obstacles that prevented them from enjoying equality. The telling of the stories, in a public context, brought issues once considered private into the public realm and gave other women the strength and confidence to engage in collective action for changes to laws, attitudes and practices. From this point on, the number of women's organisations increased exponentially and the issues became more public. The RCAP offered Aboriginal people a similar opportunity; that of reaffirming, across nations, that

people were and should continue on the path of recovery. While this movement was already in motion, the RCAP simply confirmed and reinforced it. This is the power of rhetoric, to engage people in the politics of their lives.

Did the Royal Commission contribute to the sense that non-Aboriginal people had a responsibility for changing the situation of Aboriginal people? The responsibility for achieving these changes was ultimately identified by witnesses at the Commission hearings as lying in multiple places at once. Canadian governments were called upon to remove the obstacles that keep Aboriginal people in a state of poverty, dependence and cultural loss. Aboriginal people also called upon one another and their leaders to address the massive social problems and corruption within their communities, in part by re-activating the spiritual and cultural traditions of the past. In addition to locating the solutions in the different communities and governments in Canada, the Commission also enjoined Canadians to engage in dialogue. In this thesis, I also showed how the Commission's choice of language fostered the conditions upon which dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples could occur. In order to mobilise the language of healing, Aboriginal people and the Commission had to identify what was broken, wounded or diseased. It was this information and testimony that set the scene for a non-Aboriginal audience to hear, learn and possibly feel some degree of responsibility for the conditions of Aboriginal people in Canada. It was this context that also encouraged Aboriginal people to continue to tell about the pain of residential schools, cultural loss and poverty.

The dialogue was made possible in part because the language of healing appealed to Canadians' emotions. Metaphors offer a way to engage people's unconscious; they act

as a bridge between conscious and unconscious beliefs by speaking to people's emotions. The metaphor of healing draws upon people's relationship to health and pain. I have suggested that a Canadian audience was likely to be sensitive to the pain of others in light of Charles Taylor's argument that the modern self rejects the idea that people should suffer for no reason. Because the Canadian audience, at least a portion of it, carried a degree of guilt regarding the historical role of Canadians and their governments in the destruction of Aboriginal communities, there was a potential openness for addressing some of the problems. Even though Canadians know and care little about Aboriginal affairs (Pointing, 2000), it is reasonable to suggest however that they knew enough to experience group guilt about Aboriginal peoples. This guilt is described as a bad feeling regarding the in-group's past and present mistreatment of a disadvantaged group (McGarty, Pederson, Leach, Mansell, Waller and Bhiuc: 2005). Research has shown this feeling to be conducive to openness regarding restitution and apologies (see McGarty et al, 2005). In this context, one need not necessarily have shared negativity to develop a political climate willing to engage in change; although it may require an ethical sense of citizenship. It might be possible to conclude that Canadians began to develop a shared responsibility for the future.

The perception that speakers and the audience had a common understanding of healing made dialogue possible. In the absence of a shared negativity, there was in fact a presence of a shared vocabulary. Healing refers to the world of wellness and can accommodate different meanings. As such, healing could be discussed in a way that engages Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Moreover, healing has not been associated with an ideology that may constrain its dialogic potential. The choice of this

language facilitated dialogue regarding the future for it fostered the appearance of common ground. This appearance of commonality may have contributed to creating the beginnings of trust that lead to a weakening of barriers of protection and resistance to addressing contentious issues.

The healing language allows speakers and audience to make assumptions or to make explicit who or what requires healing. Thus the definition of the problem will differ from person to person. In this context, part of the dialogue involves identifying the problem that required healing. Aboriginal people and the Commission documents identify the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people as out of balance. This implies that the responsibility to change lies in more than one community. I assume that for many non-Aboriginal people, it is not the relationship that is ill, but Aboriginal people. I also assume that these same non-Aboriginal people do not for the most part really recognise a need for a change in the relationship, in a way that interpellates them directly. Yet for Aboriginal people, changes must occur as much within their communities and nations as within the larger Canadian population. Within the gap between these two perspectives there is plenty of room for dialogue. This dialogue could occur because at least the language chosen to discuss the problem, even if the problem was not commonly defined, was understood by all. Along with the emotional associations with healing, the appearance of commonality made it possible for the Commission to engage with Canadians in a way that did not directly confront their guilt while clearly drawing upon it to achieve results.

In the third chapter, I also argued that healing had a radical potential; radical because the world view associated with Aboriginal healing as presented throughout the

Commission's work challenges the foundations of Euro-Canadian thought. The Commission's way of figuring healing within a 'society is a body metaphor' gently confronts Euro-Canadian givens such as the independent body, the mind/body split, the supremacy of the human world over the rest, the split between politics and spirituality; the hierarchy of roles within the social body. This type of confrontation tends to take place over and potentially has an impact after a long period of time. In the context of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations, it would already be an improvement if, following the Commission, government policies and actions recognised minimally that Aboriginal peoples may want to organise their societies differently than the Canadian state. Ultimately, the Commission challenges Canadians to engage in a shift in world-view for the benefit of Aboriginal people. The Commission suggested that Aboriginal knowledge and world-view could contribute to some of the problems facing Canadian society, most notably in the area of environmental degradation.

In this thesis, I have not been able to investigate how my theories regarding the generative potential of healing would have an impact the interpretation of how the Royal Commission's work was received and how it may have had an impact on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations in Canada. For now, I will offer this brief exploration of the impact of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples. Rick Pointing's research suggests that Canadian public opinion is now more favourable to accommodating cultural differences than at any time in recent history (2000). This appears to find some resonance in Aboriginal and state relations. In 1998, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, a branch of the government, released a statement of reconciliation that was designed as part of the response of the government to the RCAP. Its purpose was to recognise the negative

impacts of colonialism on Métis, Inuit and First Nations peoples. It took a step to recognising Aboriginal world views when it stated:

Diverse, vibrant Aboriginal nations had ways of life rooted in fundamental values concerning their relationships to the Creator, the environment, and each other, in the role of Elders as the living memory of their ancestors, and in their responsibilities as custodians of the lands, waters and resources of their homelands¹⁴.

In this document the language of healing is not particularly present except to acknowledge that the survivors of residential school require healing. Yet, the statement itself attempts to reconfigure the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in a way that speaks more to partnership than assimilation. In this statement, the government recognised that Aboriginal people had a way of life that was the result of thousands of years of knowledge and experience. In so doing, the government contrasted its historical attitude of cultural superiority that made it possible for so many generations to believe that the only civilised culture descended from the Europeans. The statement continued with the recognition of Canada's role in the suppression and weakening of Aboriginal cultures, societies and nations. The government also apologised for its responsibility in the residential school abuse.

The Canadian government was not the only body to recognise its role in traumatising Aboriginal people. Both during and following the Commission, from 1993-1998, the Anglican Church, the Presbyterian Church and the United Church apologized for a variety of abuses, the imposition of language and spirituality on Aboriginal peoples

¹⁴ http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/gs/rec_e.html, accessed on June 26, 2006.

and its system of assimilation (Castellano, 2006). This suggests that a sense of responsibility for the past had begun to develop.

As a follow up to this apology, the government funded the creation of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. This foundation's purpose aimed to offer culturally specific approaches to healing from the results of residential school abuse. The language of healing and the recovery of traditions are explicit in their mission statement:

Our mission is to encourage and support Aboriginal people in building and reinforcing sustainable healing processes that address the legacy of Physical Abuse and Sexual Abuse in the Residential School system, including intergenerational impacts.

We see our role as facilitators in the healing process by helping Aboriginal people help themselves, by providing resources for healing initiatives, by promoting awareness of healing issues and needs, and by nurturing a supportive public environment. We also work to engage Canadians in this healing process by encouraging them to walk with us on the path of reconciliation.

Ours is a holistic approach. Our goal is to help create, reinforce and sustain conditions conducive to healing, reconciliation and self determination. We are committed to addressing the legacy of abuse in all its forms and manifestations, direct, indirect and intergenerational, by building on the strengths and resiliency of Aboriginal people (http://www.ahf.ca/e_Values.aspx, retrieved on June 20, 2006).

Some of my findings are echoed in this statement. As suggested in the mission statement, the healing approach is one that reinforces Aboriginal peoples' strengths. This may fit in

with my analysis of the ritual of transformation the healing rhetoric provides. In other words, their goal is also to persuade Aboriginal people of the relevance of healing as a way to lead to self-determination (generally meant both individually and collectively). The perspective is one of holistic wellness that includes individuals and their relations. This too was part of my discussion. Yet for the most part, the emphasis of the healing foundation is on individual healing as a way to achieve community healing. In spite of references to encouraging Canadians to walk the path of reconciliation with Aboriginal peoples, there are neither references to healing the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, nor to changes the Canadian population or governments should engage in. An important shift is nevertheless occurring at the level of Aboriginal communities and this is in large part due to the programs funded by the Healing Foundation. They seem to contribute to strengthening Aboriginal identity, communities and collective actions.

While the Healing Foundation has adopted to a certain degree a therapeutic language, the groups receiving funding seem to draw heavily upon the world-view discussed in my thesis that actually challenges the Euro-Canadian therapeutic language. With references to post-traumatic stress disorder, the psychological of effects of trauma, the language of therapy permeates the report. This language differs considerably from the language of the RCAP report in that it deploys the language of conventional medicine and psychotherapy more than did the RCAP. This does not mean that the projects at the grass roots have taken up this perspective (further research would be required to examine the role of the rhetoric of healing in community practices). According to the Healing

Foundation, 85% of the projects draw upon traditional healing practices¹⁵ (ibid: 134).

Consider the following project presented by the Horse Lake First Nation:

The purpose of the project is to develop and implement a holistic community based healing program for the Horse Lake Nation. The project will help identify the impacts that were bestowed upon them by the Residential Schools and other oppressive systems, physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally. This will be achieved through healing circles, individual, family and group counselling, workshops, retreats, seminars and community gatherings. This will ensure that their traditional values, beliefs and language will be revived and maintained.¹⁶

The goals are to increase: “the awareness of the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in residential schools; (...) the numbers of individuals engaged in healing with positive results; (...) capacity to facilitate healing; (...) support from related organizations and community leadership (Castellano, 2006: 94). Together, these changes lead to transformation, where healing no longer just means “fixing” but “building” (ibid: 93). In fact, the Healing Foundation writes of the stages of community healing that in some ways resembles Csordas’ stages in the rhetoric of transformation. The transformation of communities occurs in four stages: Winter – The Journey Begins; Spring – Gathering Momentum; Summer – Hitting the Wall; Fall – From Healing to Transformation. While their typography is not rhetorical in the way the Foundation describes it, it would not be difficult to connect Csordas’ considerations on the rhetoric of ritual transformation, my

¹⁵ The Healing Foundation writes that traditional healing are different depending on the culture, the community and the nation but has common elements. “Spirituality is a core element of traditional healing. A good life is perceived in terms of balance, wholeness, connectedness and relationship, while imbalance fragmentation and isolation are considered roots causes of disease and distress. Traditional healing rebuilds balance and is seen to “enforce the stronger aspects of self; begin developing weaker aspects of self; revive a sense of clarity, strength, vitality, desire for life, increased cultural pride, improved self-care, parenting and leadership.” (Castellano, 2006: 134).

¹⁶ http://www.ahf.ca/fp/e_pull_project.php?id=4211.00®ion=Alberta, retrieved on June 20, 2006.

observations and the Healing Foundation's work. Simply hundreds of projects have been funded with these multiple, individual and collective goal in mind. Healing has become so widespread that it may constitute a movement. If there has been one clear impact of the RCAP and its language of healing, it has been in persuading Aboriginal people to engage in a "healing journey." According to the Final Report of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (ibid), although unfinished, the healing journey is largely underway. Moreover, partnerships have been developed with the Churches with the purpose of exploring paths to reconciliation (ibid).

Signs of change have occurred in other areas as well. Canadian courts have recognised Aboriginal people's oral traditions and as such have begun to allow the presentation of oral documents as legitimate evidence in land claims (Benhabib, 1999). This is a significant shift because it challenges the essence of what constitutes not only evidence but also objectivity and the independence of the subject. The courts have avoided the experience-as-truth trap (Scott, 1992), calling for other forms of evidence to be weighed against the knowledge provided by oral accounts. Despite this shift, which accommodates cultural differences, Canadian governments have acted upon this court decision with ambivalence. In the last few years, the Inuit of Northern Québec have provided significant oral testimony that supports the idea that the RCMP deliberately shot thousands of husky dogs that were central to the survival of Inuit hunting and fishing practices. To date, the government has failed to weigh equally this evidence against the RCMP's written documentation. Nevertheless, this story has been debated publicly in a way that gives greater credence to the Inuit perspective than the RCMP's presentations.

The negotiations process involving aspects of self-government and land disputes have undergone some significant changes. In 1999, an agreement to create a third territory in Canada came to fruition with the birth of Nunavut. Inhabited mostly by Inuit people (85%), the territory is governed by a public government, run by legislative members who run individually (as there are no parties). It functions on a consensual basis. The premier is also guided by a committee of elders who oversee the implementation and respect of culturally specific practices and knowledge in the functioning of government. More research would be required however to investigate if and how the world-view of the Inuit have influenced how the Nunavut government is run. For example, how does the all-around vision of Inuit people influence the government's relationship to resource management?

Negotiations to create a public regional government in Nunavik (Northern Quebec) are also well underway. These public governments are interesting for they are based not on ethnicity but on residency. As such, these are regional governments run by a majority of Inuit in a spirit of partnership among residents of the North. This spirit of partnership has been developed at other levels as well. The governments of Canada and Québec developed an approach to negotiations, called the "approche commune" by which:

(L)es parties ont convenu d'explorer, à compter du mois de mars 1999, de nouveaux scénarios, concepts et principes dans le cadre d'une approche nouvelle appelée « Approche commune » de façon à trouver des solutions à la table de négociation plutôt que de référer les divergences majeures au niveau politique.

L'objectif poursuivi par les négociateurs de chacune des parties, dans le cadre de cette démarche, était d'élaborer les bases d'une entente qui mettrait en place tous les éléments requis pour favoriser une coexistence harmonieuse et pacifique débouchant sur une nouvelle génération de traité (Gouvernement du Québec, 2000).

These are signs that various levels of government have stepped away from the position that Aboriginal people could not govern themselves and required government supervision to manage their own affairs. Instead, to a certain degree, they were ready to find a new way to negotiate issues of territory. There have been and continue to be problems with this process for there are imbalances of power in the relationship between levels of government and Aboriginal people. At least, some signs exist that governments have begun to approach negotiations based on a partnership model.

If Erik Doxtader's work on reconciliation is accurate, reconciliation is a process more than it is an event. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People's did not offer a reconciliatory event, but it did add to the momentum for healing to occur. According to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF), reconciliation requires acknowledgment of wrong-doing that is specific, forthright, recognises the impact and demonstrates the belief that the victims are not responsible for the abuse (Castellano, 2006: 177). According the AHF, this acknowledgment was not provided in the Statement of Reconciliation but was so in a recent agreement. In May 2006, the government continued to recognise its responsibilities for residential schools and committed money to individuals or their survivors as a way to offer redress for the abuse. It also announced the creation of a Truth

and Reconciliation Commission with a goal of healing and reconciliation.¹⁷ It is designed as a public story-telling process regarding the impact of the residential school system.¹⁸ As we have seen, telling the stories of what is known but little spoken can foster healing and possibly reconciliation, but it cannot be the only feature. For reconciliation to occur, a sense of 'shared negativity' must exist. Because reconciliation is not an event, other factors can set reconciliation in motion. We have seen this occur with the development of the rhetoric of healing. Clearly, the rhetoric of healing has permeated Aboriginal communities. It has become the language of hope, recovery and empowerment for Aboriginal people and nations. With strength and determination, drawing upon the rhetoric of healing, these same communities will engage Canadians more and more on the path to reconciliation. Strengthened by the ritual of transformation, Aboriginal people will continue to challenge and engage Canadians in a dialogue that may set the conditions for reconciliation to occur.

¹⁷ http://www.irsr-rqpi.gc.ca/english/news_10_05_06.html, retrieved on June 20, 2006.

¹⁸ <http://www.united-church.ca/residentialschools/2006/0502.shtm>, retrieved on June 20, 2006.

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