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Aboriginal
 Healing
 Foundation

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A Healing Journey

Final Report
 Summary Points



A Message from the President



Danet'e:

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation's Final Report attempts to capture seven years of work among community-based healing initiatives that address the intergenerational legacy of Canada's Indian residential school system. This publication summarizes the highlights of a larger, three-volume report and is intended to provide the reader with a useful understanding of the healing work the AHF has supported.

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation was established March 31, 1998 as a cornerstone of *Gathering Strength—Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*, a federal strategy to renew the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Government of Canada. The AHF was given \$350 million and an eleven-year mandate, organized into three stages:

- 1) Setting up of operations,
- 2) Commitment of a \$350 million healing fund towards initiatives that address the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in the Indian residential schools of Canada, and
- 3) Writing of a final report.

With the publication of this report, we have fulfilled the third and final stage of our mandate.

Perhaps the theme that emerges most powerfully from the report is the enduring resilience of Aboriginal peoples. Despite a century of efforts to forcibly assimilate "Indians" into Euro-Canadian society, Aboriginal peoples today look to traditional cultures for healing. As a funding agency, the AHF has had the honour and privilege of working in partnership with many courageous and inspiring individuals. While we at the AHF have played a role in the healing movement, the true foundation of healing has been the people, many of whom were labouring to improve the condition of Aboriginal communities before there was an AHF.

There is however much to do. The Final Report, not only assesses accomplishments, but indicates areas where further efforts are required. Here, the message in brief is that more time and more program support is necessary. Many have begun the healing journey, and many were not yet ready to undertake this journey when the Aboriginal Healing Foundation was created. Healing the effects of a century (and more) of historic trauma will require the sustained efforts of a generation.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, I thank you for your interest in this document and I hope you find it of personal use. To those who have come here to learn, perhaps for the first time, about the AHF and the residential school system, I offer a welcome. To those who have come for practical support in their healing work, I offer appreciation and gratitude for your commitment to helping our people. And to those who have come for a deeper understanding of their experiences as Survivors, I offer respect and hope that this work may contribute to healing.

Masi,
Georges Erasmus

A Survivor's Story



Elkhorn Residential School, courtesy of Janice Longboat

Shirley speaks of her confusion about her identity, trying to merge into mainstream society and cover her brown skin with make-up, of having no sense that she had a right to her own opinion, and of being like a zombie following without question the directions that others gave her. She worked as a laundry and scrub woman in a hospital near home, made and ended a bad marriage, and took night school and upgrading courses to attain high school equivalency. In 1979, at the age of 40, she undertook the challenge of entering Trent University to finish what she had promised her father as she departed for residential school.

When Shirley graduated with her Bachelor of Arts in 1983 everything seemed to point in the direction of teaching. With the background of her Native Studies degree she began teaching Life Skills and Natives in Transition preparing Aboriginal people for work or further education. In 1986 she followed in the footsteps of one of her mentors, Fred Wheatley, and obtained a position in the Native Studies Department at Trent University teaching Ojibway language, which is closely related to Odawa. She says: "Teaching helped me to heal myself because as I was teaching I also grew. In the language there are a lot of words and some of these are healing words. Last year I did a workshop on healing words."

Today Shirley Williams is a Full Professor and a role model to the many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students who pass through her classes. She has completed a diploma in language teaching and a Master of Arts degree. She has produced books for language instruction and a CD-ROM bringing Ojibway language into the modern context of the hockey rink. Her residential school experience caused her to take a long, often painful, detour from her early goals. She credits her survival as an Odawa woman to the grounding in language and culture that she received within her family and to the healing power of learning. She is fulfilling the promises that she made to her father and herself so long ago.

Shirley and other Survivors have reclaimed wellness for themselves. There are many others who are still on a healing journey and yet others who are heavily burdened with the legacy of residential schools. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation was established to support their healing journeys.

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The last band-run residential school closed in 1998.

We look back today at a system that tried to erase Aboriginal cultures from history and we look forward to a time when there is again a relationship of mutual respect based upon the historic treaties between Aboriginal people and the Government of Canada.

With the lessons of history in their service, Aboriginal people have begun to heal the wounds of the past.

On January 7, 1998, the Federal Government of Canada issued a *Statement of Reconciliation* and unveiled a new initiative called *Gathering Strength—Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*. A strategy to begin the process of reconciliation, *Gathering Strength* featured the announcement of a \$350 million healing fund.

On March 31, 1998, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation was created. It was given ten years to disburse this \$350-million fund beginning March 31, 1999 and ending March 31, 2009.

Since June 1999, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation has been providing funding support to community-based initiatives that

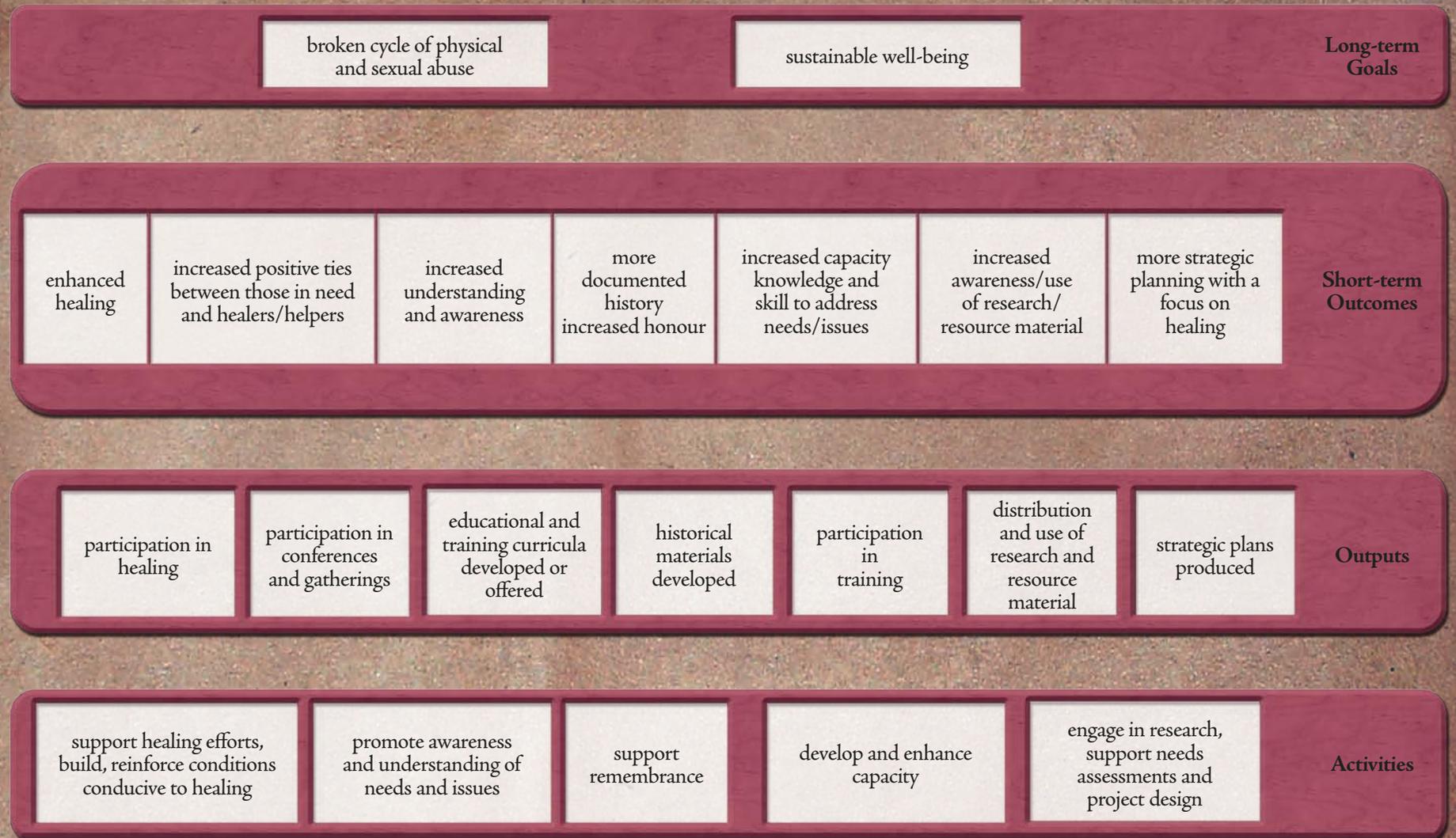


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Map of Residential Schools



The Aboriginal Healing Foundation Logic Model



The time frame for AHF program and evaluation activity has been too short to measure long-term impact on sexual abuse, physical abuse, suicide, incarceration and children in care. However, AHF has gathered valuable information on the nature and impact of Aboriginal healing activities. This information can provide the basis for longer-term research.

AHF Funding

AHF has funded the following types of projects:

Healing Services	provide direct healing services through either traditional or Western approaches; focussed either on the community, family or individual; and meet the ethical standards of therapeutic care and community-based healing
Prevention/Awareness	activities aimed at raising awareness of the Legacy, early detection and prevention of the effects of abuse
Conference	gatherings that include speakers, sessions and participants from a wide geographic area
Honouring History	memorials, genealogy and other projects related to remembrance
Training	providing instruction or specialized education for potential healers and curriculum development to build sustainable capacity for the healing process
Knowledge-Building	research in program design and capacity building
Needs Assessment	assessing the healing needs of the community
Project Design and Setup	projects that only address start-up and have not initiated the provision of other services

**As of
31 March 2005:**

1,346 contribution agreements have been signed for a total of \$377,745,857 (audited). These figures do not include the \$40 million allocated to the AHF in February 2005, which extended 91 projects for a 2-year period ending March 31, 2007.



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Community Healing Journey

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increased organizational & leadership support

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increased partnerships

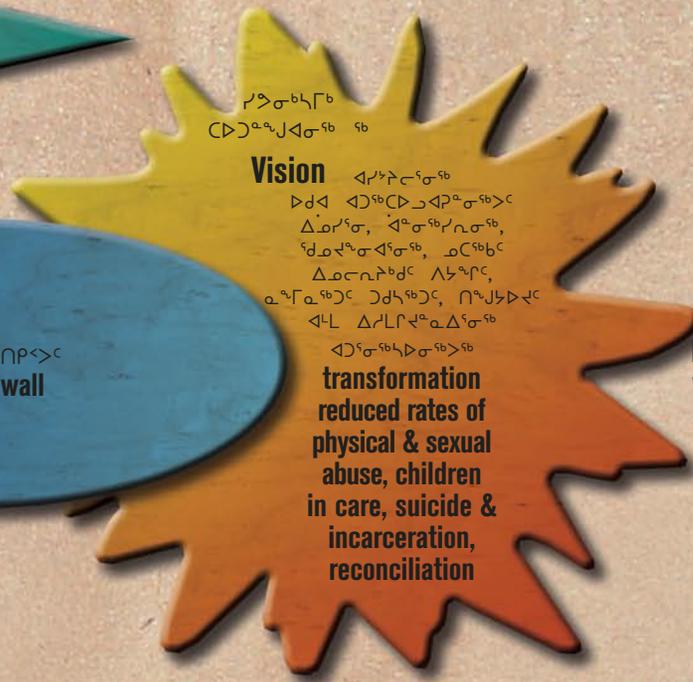
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increased capacity to facilitate healing

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**suicide
 family violence
 addiction
 despair**

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the journey begins

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gathering momentum

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hitting the wall



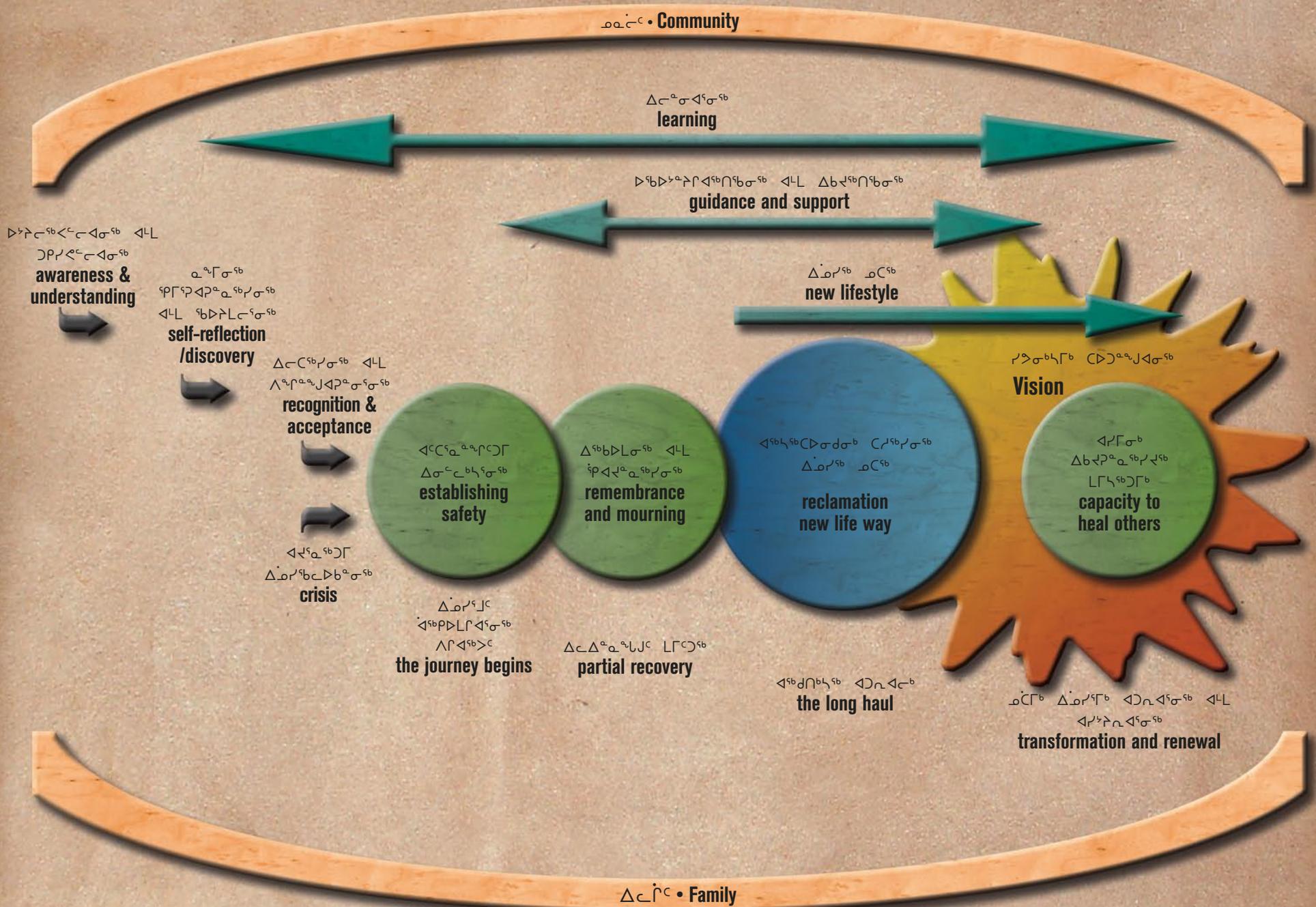
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**Healthy individuals
 vibrant community**

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increased awareness of Legacy

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increased personal healing

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increased # of individuals engaged in healing

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Survivor's Healing Journey





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Helping Aboriginal people heal themselves



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Aboriginal Healing Foundation