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# The Red Road approach to healing as used in Native American adolescent addiction treatment

Colleen M. Husak  
*University of Northern Iowa*

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# The Red Road approach to healing as used in Native American adolescent addiction treatment

## **Abstract**

Traditional treatment programs have not worked with Native Americans. Instead, programs designed to be culturally sensitive are needed (Burn, 1992). In this paper, the author will explore the specific theory of the Red Road approach as used in Native American adolescent substance abuse treatment facilities. The Red Road approach is practical in its psychological application at the same time that it incorporates and encourages the spiritual beliefs which are a major part of the philosophy of most Native Americans (Black Elk & Lyon, 1991). As Black Elk and Lyons (1991) noted, even Native Americans who no longer practice their ancestral religious beliefs are often still exposed to these ways, as they are almost inevitably taught spirituality as part of their identity.

THE RED ROAD APPROACH TO HEALING  
AS USED IN NATIVE AMERICAN ADOLESCENT ADDICTION TREATMENT

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In Partial Fulfillment  
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Master of Arts in Education

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Colleen M. Husak

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Date Approved

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor of Research Paper

**Terry Kottman**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor of Research Paper

9-21-99

Date Approved

**Michael D. Waggoner**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Head, Department of Educational Leadership,  
Counseling, and Postsecondary Education

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Substance abuse among the Native American population is an on-going problem which seems to be getting worse. A 1994 Bureau of Indian Affairs Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicated that 85% of all Native American youth have tried alcohol. In addition, 42% admitted to consuming five or more drinks at one setting during the previous month (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1994). In comparison, a survey done with a Caucasian youth population found that 11% admitted they had used alcohol six or more times in the previous thirty days. Twenty-three percent of the Caucasian youth surveyed admitted to consuming five or more drinks in one sitting in the previous two weeks. This same survey indicated that overall, 68% of Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) students have tried marijuana; 15% have tried cocaine; and 36% of BIA ninth through twelfth graders have experimented with inhalants (Benson, 1993).

Findings were similar in other studies. One study found that 82% of Native American adolescents admitted to having used alcohol, compared with 66% of non-Native youth (Beauvais, 1992). A recent Indian Health Services study found that Native American youth have from twice to five times the chance of using inhalants than that of non-Native youth (Hillbrant, Earp, & Brutus, 1997). There is cause for concern in that adolescent addiction is linked significantly with teenage smoking, academic struggles, apathy, depression, accidental fatalities, aggression, gambling, use of weapons, and suicide (Benson, 1993).

These statistics clearly point to a high prevalence of drug use in Native American youth. A 1986 Federal Task Force on Black and Minority Health found that it is not only youth who are affected by this problem. Adolescent substance addiction has a high

correlation with adult addiction issues. Alcohol is directly related to five of the ten leading causes of death for Indian people nationally, including automobile accidents, miscellaneous accidents, homicide, suicide, and disease such as liver cancer (Middelton-Moz, Kauffman, & Latimer, 1995). Anna Latimer (1995), Project Director for the Seattle Indian Health Board, stated that alcoholism is in epidemic proportions in the Native American population due to the intergenerational cycle of addiction. Cultural depression and prejudice against Native Americans, along with generational conditions, are cited as factors leading to the continuing cycle of addiction (Middelton-Moz & Dwinell, 1986).

Traditional treatment programs have not worked with Native Americans. Instead, programs designed to be culturally sensitive are needed (Burn, 1992). In order to be culturally sensitive, it is first necessary to consider the cultural background of clients and question clients about their foundation of beliefs (Hallowell, 1993). Counselors who find themselves working with Native American clients must work to become culturally sensitive by reviewing the research and laying aside any personal stereotypes and beliefs (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992).

A counselor must consider his or her approach and determine its appropriateness for working with Native Americans. In his list of recommendations for counseling Native American clients, Hallowell (1993) described how cultural sensitivity is lacking in some standard approaches used by counselors. According to Hallowell, counselors sometimes tend to utilize approaches without considering the cultural background of clients and thus risk offending their clients. The result of not changing one's approach depending on

cultural orientation can be a grave injustice inflicted by a counselor, thus jeopardizing the counseling relationship (Tippeconnic, 1989).

Advances have been made to increase sensitivity in multicultural issues.

Universities have made multicultural curriculum adjustments, workshops are available for counseling professionals, and standards are being examined for the counseling profession.

These actions do benefit the Native American client/counseling relationship (Sue,

Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). Along with this research, traditional Native American approaches are being written down and made available to professionals.

In this paper, the author will explore the specific theory of the Red Road approach as used in Native American adolescent substance abuse treatment facilities. The Red Road approach is practical in its psychological application at the same time that it incorporates and encourages the spiritual beliefs which are a major part of the philosophy of most Native Americans (Black Elk & Lyon, 1991). As Black Elk and Lyons (1991) noted, even Native Americans who no longer practice their ancestral religious beliefs are often still exposed to these ways as they are almost inevitably taught spirituality as part of their identity.

### The Red Road Approach

The Red Road is a holistic approach to emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual wellness based on Native American healing concepts and traditions. Incorporating the entire person, Red Road counselors assist clients in looking at themselves and evaluating whether they are living well-balanced lives (HeavyRunner & Morris, 1997). A balanced life occurs when an individual lives consistent with the Creator's expectations. Therefore,

part of the Red Road counselor's role is to facilitate awareness of those expectations. This is done through listening to where the client is, sharing the client's pain, and teaching the client the significance of spiritual ceremonies of Native American heritage. It is the relationship with the Creator that is given the greatest value. Prayer, or communication with the Creator, is encouraged as a tool of healing (Arbogast, 1995).

### Historical Background in Development of the Red Road

The Red Road is the way back home, as interpreted by both therapists and clients who use this approach in healing. It is the way to the road that the Creator has given people so that when they die they go to that good place with Him (Brooks & Berryhill, 1991). The Red Road approach does not have a recorded date of origin. Instead, it is tradition: it is the way that always has been according to Standing Crow (1998), a counselor who adheres to the Red Road approach.

In his personal narrative "Healing Through Feeling," Standing Crow (1998) compared the spiritual perspective between the Red Road approach and the more commonly known Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). According to Standing Crow, adherents of AA talk about powerlessness, whereas adherents of the Red Road focus on empowerment through the Creator who is the center of everything. Both approaches promote spiritual consideration but the journey is different. Alcoholics Anonymous follows a 12 step program and participants look to the future while amending the past. The Red Road has Seven Sacred Rites. "We have our songs, the memory of the face of the Creator, ceremonies and language. All is done in prayer. We go back to our culture to help us today" (Standing Crow, 1998, p. 2).

Thin Elk, the founder of the Red Road, was joined by Thomas in his efforts to develop a culturally relevant approach to treating addiction (Arbogast, 1995). Thomas described his frustration in overcoming his own addiction. He began using as an adolescent and sought out several treatment programs. It was not until he rediscovered his own Native spirituality, with Thin Elk's help, that he was able to stop the substance using and embrace healing (Arbogast, 1995).

One older Native woman described life on her reservation during the transition from a dry reservation to one that allowed the sale of alcohol. In a taped interview, this woman described the devastation she witnessed as a young girl (Brooks & Berryhill, 1991):

I seen grandmothers who had never drank were drinking. I seen more arrests. I seen a lot of spouse battering and fragmentation of the family. I seen little kids sitting outside of the bar crying for their parents who were inside of the bar. I seen babies left in cars (taped quote).

This story is not a unique one for adults who began drinking or using drugs as adolescents. Many Native American individuals interviewed by Arbogast (1995) went on to describe the many different types of treatment they participated in to stop their addictions. The stories are common, and they all share the type of sentiment Kills Small does. "I don't think I would be sober today if I hadn't picked up the drum" (Arbogast, 1995, p. 145).

## Spiritual Beliefs of the Red Road

Among the most important neglected elements of the Native American culture are the deep spiritual beliefs held and passed down through generations. Although these beliefs do vary throughout tribes, clans, and families, common threads permeate but are often not recognized as integral parts of most Native individuals. For example, the Creator is seen as the center of an inter-connected circle in which all life is involved, including animals and plant life (Tippeconnic, 1989). An eagle, for example, is often viewed as a spiritual messenger of hope. An owl might forecast change or even impending doom. The trees might carry the spirits of ancestors. As all life is interconnected, the animal in the hunt allows itself to be sacrificed and eaten. In return, it is man's job to respect and not abuse nature. All relationships with nature and man are provided by the Creator, and living with respect is each individual's responsibility (Howe, personal communication, Feb. 23, 1999).

Many common aspects of Native people's beliefs might be considered superstitious in other cultures. Different tribes hold varying governing beliefs surrounding issues of birth, passage to adulthood, and other areas of life and death. The reason for these beliefs and resulting actions is to avoid offending the Creator (Howe, personal communication, Feb. 23, 1999). For example, the Meskwaki tribe of Iowa believe that when death occurs, the deceased spirit remains on earth for four days before departing to live with the Creator. During the four days, all community special events are to be called off and community members are to remain relatively quiet, not raising their voices or whistling.

To violate these principles would be to risk joining the deceased since the appropriate respect was not shown (Pushetonequa, personal communication, May 20, 1996).

Traditional ceremonies are another common thread which remain an important aspect in tribal life. Pow wows, for example, are common ceremonies held to celebrate the Creator's gifts through dance. Attendance at pow wows and other ceremonies is often high among all ages. Therefore, when Native American children attend pow wows and other ceremonies instead of attending school, their school absenteeism might be misconstrued as irresponsible truancy (Pushetonequa, personal communication, May, 1996). Since pow wows and other ceremonies are of spiritual significance, the therapist must give value to and address the spiritual element of the Native American individual (Tippeconnic, 1989).

The focus of the Red Road journey is one of relationship. The most significant relationship is that between the individual and the Creator. The Red Road teaches that the Creator has certain expectations for people to follow. To most popular theorists, the Creator's expectations are unfamiliar: be a whole, well-balanced person; work together with others living in life's inter-related circle; and seek to live a better life for the self and the Creator. These are seen as the principles for walking on earth. This focus is in direct opposition to most approaches where empathy with separation and feedback is the objective (Lakota Concepts, 1991).

#### World Views, Personal Priorities, and Values

Cross (1997), Executive Director of the National Indian Child Welfare Association, defined the predominant world views of European culture verses Native

American belief. European Americans adhere to the linear world view which is grounded in logic and dictates that cause has to come before effect. According to Cross, this is in opposition to the Native American world view that sees life as a harmonious, continuous cyclical relationship where health is achieved through balance.

Significant differences exist in values and beliefs from the Native American standpoint. These include the notions that white people think that they are superior to everyone else; that Whites force their opinions on Native Americans; that Whites are aggressive, untrustworthy, and egotistical; that Whites force their spiritual beliefs on other cultures; that Whites lack common sense because they ask ridiculous questions about Native Americans; that Whites think that Native Americans get their money from the government and have all kinds of special benefits from being Native; and that Natives believe Whites have high expectations for Indian people to assimilate rapidly (Oppelt, 1987).

With such differences and stereotypes in existence, it is no wonder that treatment facilities have been developed which serve Native American clients only. Research does not exist as to the success rate in serving this population of clients in Native American drug treatment facilities verses mainstream facilities. Howe (personal communication, February 23, 1999), a Supervising Counselor at the Chief Gall Treatment Facility in Mobridge, South Dakota, uses some of the aspects of the Red Road journey. It is his opinion that when dealing with a traditional Native American client, a facility geared for this specific population will be more successful in reaching the client.

## Key Concepts of the Red Road

### View of Human Nature

The Red Road view of human nature has a more ambiguous definition than other theories. Instead of looking at good versus bad, adherents of the Red Road approach see all as connected with equal value and adhere to this philosophy in its treatment approach (Brooks & Berryhill, 1991). At the very center, an energy force comes from the Creator. Everything is relative in a literal sense (Lakota Concepts, 1991). The Sioux tribes end their prayers by saying “Mitakuye-Oyasin,” which means “All my relation.” This acknowledgment to all surrounding life, including the two-leggeds, the four-leggeds, the winged, and the creeping/crawlers, illustrates the respect and view of oneness that is inherent for Native people and the foundation from which life is lived (Blackwolf Jones & Jones, 1995).

When incorporating this philosophy of respect into an addiction treatment program for youth, it is necessary to first ensure that this foundation has been built for the clients. Howe (personal communication, Feb. 23, 1999) reported that the majority of the clients at his center are ironically of a Christian background. According to Howe, parents often choose the Native American facility so their children will receive substance abuse treatment along with instruction on what it is to be Native since recent generations have been deprived of these teachings at home. Because recent generations of Native Americans are not complete in teaching their children about their culture, sentiments like the following are common. “Until I was five or six years old, I didn’t know what being

Indian was. I didn't know I was Indian. No one ever mentioned anything about being Indian" (Arbogast, 1994, p. 8).

### Perception of Reality

Adolescent Natives in treatment are taught reality from the traditional standpoint. God, the Creator, is introduced as the Great Spirit who is everywhere and in everything. The belief that the more a person help someone else the more blessings he or she receives is consistent with the perspective that everything is relation (HeavyRunner & Morris, 1997).

The material world is taught as temporary. Possessions are to be cherished as gifts from the Creator, not the property of any one person. The only property individuals hold is their very being. The physical body or shell, therefore, is to be treated in a health-conscious way (Blackwolf Jones & Jones, 1995).

### Self-Awareness

After an introduction to the foundations of Native spiritual beliefs are taught, clients are aided in the all-important task of defining where they are in relation to life. They are taught that the paths to healing and wholeness come from faith in the Creator. That faith is developed so that healing through feeling can begin. As the Red Road prescribes, this pain must be faced, and to be faced it must be identified (Middelton-Moz, 1986).

Listening is the first step to self-awareness that clients are taught. "It involves learning to listen to yourself, to your world, and ultimately to your silence," as Blackwolf Jones described (1995). True listening is aided by the Creator and leads to awareness of

the self and world. This awareness can provide revelations which are authentic and far-reaching. Native people on the Red Road journey of healing must reach for the Spirit World (Wegscheider-Cruse, 1981). The value of reaching for the Spirit World is taught to adolescent substance abusers. They are shown that they cannot get to the Spirit World mentally and that a finite mind cannot understand the infinite Being of God. Instead, they are taught to experience the Spirit World. This experience happens through smelling a flower, listening to the rain, and feeling the joy and exhilaration of daily life (Blackwolf Jones & Jones, 1995). After learning to listen to themselves, their world, and their Creator, clients on the Red Road are taught to feel and live each moment. This is an important distinction since alcohol was often the method used to avoid such an experience (Middelton-Moz & Dwinell, 1986).

### Ceremonies to Self-Awareness

Talking circles are one method in which clients are taught to feel. A talking circle involves a facilitator guiding clients in discussing their perceptions of the world. Like group therapy, talking circles enable participants to learn from one another. Unlike secular group therapy, talking circles place great significance on the Creator. Since all are related, counselor self-disclosure is encouraged as a tool for learning (Standing Crow, personal communication, June 23, 1998).

The sweat lodge is a powerful ceremony of Native American tradition also used to facilitate self-awareness. The sweat lodge is a small structure made from birch or other flexible branches and many coverings of thin bark. Today sweat lodges are often constructed with tarps instead of bark. Various tribes may prefer different materials and

sizes, but other than that, the construction is the same. Because the circle is significant in Native American religion and life, the shape of the sweat lodge is circular. Inside the lodge, or inika'gapi, is a small center pit. Hours before the sweat is to begin, special rocks are heated to extreme temperatures just outside the inika'gapi door. An elder runs the ceremony, and others are invited to attend and learn from the Spirits who will visit (Standing Crow, personal communication, June 23, 1998).

Howe (personal communication, Feb. 23, 1999) explained that adolescent clients are invited weekly to participate in the sweat lodge ceremony. Many of the teenagers have not had this experience before, and the self-awareness it promotes can be a new and scary experience. However, the adolescents benefit from the patience and wisdom that the officiating elder shares. The ceremony is divided into four parts, or doors, as they are called. Each door has its own purpose. The first is to call the Spirits, the second is to offer thanksgiving, the third is to offer prayers, and the fourth is to send the Spirits back with songs of praise. Drumming and prayer occur during the entire ceremony. Participants are told to examine themselves and how they have lived the gift of life. Total darkness keeps all distractions out except for the intense heat which is intended to purify the body through the sweat it produces (Standing Crow, personal communication, June 23, 1998).

The Chanunpa, or Sacred Pipe, is a method by which prayers are offered up during the sweat lodge ceremony and other Native American rituals. Only those who are invited to have the privilege of having a pipe use this instrument in the ceremonies. Those who hold the pipe are to be respected above others. They are individuals who have journeyed

within to explore their life and live consistent with the Creator's ways. In the treatment program, prayer is taught to the clients so they will learn to live the inter-connectedness which the Red Road teaches. As Black Elk (Black Elk & Lyon, 1991) described, the Red Road is not a destination but a journey. For Black Elk, that journey is aided by the pipe. "The Chanunpa is where I go to school. I'm sixty-eight now, so it [my learning] has been going on for sixty-three years now" (p. 49).

The ceremonies in the Red Road way are used to help individuals define their own value system while remaining consistent with the Creator. If the individuals do not take the opportunity to explore themselves and discover their meaning, a point of life is missing and another opportunity in the eternal circle is missed. Through these exercises in self-awareness, adolescent Native substance abuse users are taught how wrong it is to abuse their bodies (Brooks & Berryhill, 1991).

### Living the Pain

Addiction is a way of self-medication; a way to numb emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual pain. Instead of trying to find ways to block this world through the use of substances and other defiant behaviors, clients are taught to experience, accept, and be joyful with the life gifted to them by their Creator (Standing Crow, 1997). The pain that comes with experience is lived, starting with past pain. The Red Road challenges its clients to dare to feel the insanity. They are taught that paradoxically, this frees their sanity. Since there is nothing without experience, which includes pain, coping mechanisms are destined to falter under the continued weight of stress. Red Road therapists encourage

their clients to journey to Self and finally address what is begging to be seen (Blackwolf Jones & Jones, 1995).

Because of the generations of trauma and abuse on Native Americans, young Native people often live the lie that their culture has less value than other cultures. Hanska (Arbogast, 1995) told his story of childhood shame and his eventual escape into alcoholism. The Red Road gifted him with the new perspective to search for the Truth, a truth that he wishes he had been exposed to at a younger age. Hanska stated, “What I am learning disproves everything I was taught about the Indian way being the bad way. I have proven that to myself, by myself” (Arbogast, 1995, p. 85).

Learning to let go of the erroneous past learning like Hanska’s, the encompassing coping mechanisms, and the high expectations for others, are other aspects of the Red Road. Adolescent substance abuse clients are taught about becoming their own support system, with assistance from instead of dependence on others. This leads to reduced frustration and greater peace as the circle of relationships is not blocked by hidden agendas (Standing Crow, 1997).

The Red Road focuses on teaching the four internal arrows of Recognition, Attention, Affection, and Approval. These four validations are inherently needed by all people. All need to be recognized for the special people they are, all need attention that nourishes, all need affection to heal past and future wounds, and all need approval for their positive life choices. The Red Road teaches that these four validations can be met by the Self, through the assistance of Creator and His creation. Clients with a history of making

negative past choices learn to become self-sufficient entities as they learn self-validation (Blackwolf Jones & Jones, 1995).

Defining the specific methods used in the Red Road is not easy. Standing Crow (1998) described his life as normal up until age nine when some family changes brought great confusion and pain to his life. In response to this, Standing Crow began acting out in school, he quit dancing in pow wows, and he became known as a trouble-maker around the community. A few years later, in order to numb his mounting pain, Standing Crow began drinking and enjoyed that release for a time (Arbogast, 1995). In his Red Road journey, different practices were helpful in bringing Standing Crow the discovery that healing needed to take place. But even with the beneficial steps to follow, it took an awakening to finally get him to commit to the journey. Standing Crow spent many years battling alcohol addiction before coming to a new revelation. “In 1984-85, I met Thomas and Thin Elk who taught me about myself and the teaching of the Red Road, a spiritual way of life. It clicked. The spirits were with me. It was an entire change of thought and feeling” (Standing Crow, 1998, p. 1).

Standing Crow’s (1998) experience is an example of the obligation to self that the Red Road teaches. Adolescents in treatment are taught to regularly take inventory and look at those things begging for their attention. Many obligations can be identified, but ultimate responsibility is to two identities: Self and Creator (Blackwolf Jones & Jones, 1995).

## Spiritual Awareness

The sweat lodge ceremony, sundance, vision quest (known as hambliceyapi), and other traditional ceremonies are all ways that Native Americans express gratitude to Creator (Black Elk & Lyon, 1991). Along with the sweat lodge, these other ceremonies are likely to be foreign to most of the youth entering treatment. Teaching these rituals is not what results in healing or the Red Road journey. Rather, it is inviting these young people to participate in the heart journey these ceremonies represent. To be *in* the sweat lodge is not the same as being open to the experience and wisdom that the Spirits offer (Black Elk & Lyon, 1991).

For adolescent substance abusers, a past history of trauma is often a common thread linking these clients together. Therefore, adopting the Red Road spiritual philosophy can be a challenge as the Creator could actually be blamed or discarded from the equation of possibilities considering the hardship that was sometimes endured. Clients find it a great temptation to try to define the Creator in an attempt to rationalize the events of the past. Instead, this temptation to define must be resisted as therapists and Native American elders guide these youth to places where the Creator can be intimately experienced. In defining the Creator, restrictions are made and limits are imposed (Lakota Concepts, 1991).

Red Road counselors assist their clients by relating to them in common experience, background, and thought. This is done through sharing their own stories, speaking candidly about their struggles, and explaining the mind sets that both kept them in that struggle, as well as what helped them get out. Their struggles do not necessarily have to

include issues of addiction. Instead, all of life experiences, both positive and negative, are valued as learning times (Lakota Concepts, 1991).

### Awareness of Roles

The Red Road Age addresses the issues of age and gender as factors that contribute to the roles that Native people take in life. These traditional roles are explored and passed on to adolescent clients who, most likely, were not taught them in their family of origin. Because balance is a goal, these roles are necessary to incorporate in the identity of the client (Lakota Concepts, 1991).

In Native American culture, women hold the most responsibility in child-rearing. Similar to dominant society, men are the providers. Like dominant society, these roles have shifted some with the desire or need for more family income. In traditional Native American culture, uncles and aunties hold great significance along with parents. An uncle is often like a father in being available to give advice on matters of all aspects of life, especially spiritual. An auntie is seen as a disciplinarian, holding the child of any age on a healthy path (Kuerschner, 1997). Unlike White society, in most tribes a person who loses his or her mother adopts a replacement. This occurs at any age since the roles of relations are all held in respect and equally important (Kuerschner, 1997).

This practice of adoption is especially significant when traveling the Red Road. Often the youth that come in to treatment are missing those appropriate key figures of honor in their lives due to family of origin dysfunction. In these cases, the youth are encouraged to seek out people they respect. Elders are chosen to fill the esteemed roles of mother, father, auntie, uncle, and other voids individuals may have. This aids the clients

in the process of grieving. The respected title of elder is not given to any old person, however. Instead, an elder is a wise person who has chosen to walk the Red Road (Belmont, personal communication, May 5, 1995).

### Deciding to Travel the Red Road

Even with the assistance of counselors, elders, and teachers, clients still have the choice as to whether to stay in their pattern of substance using or begin healing. Walking the Red Road is not a one time event, but a continuous journey of healthy decision-making and spiritual living. A consequence to veering off the Red Road is isolation (Standing Crow, 1998). This isolation is not a sadistic effort at condemnation, but a logical consequence to negative living. The Meskwaki tribe of Iowa traditionally placed a mark on the forehead of wayward children who refused to follow household rules. This mark represented to others in the community that the child was being punished and was not to be associated with until the disciplinarian deemed it appropriate (Pushetonequa, personal communication, May 20, 1996).

In substance abuse treatment, such an organized effort may not be possible but the effect is the same. Isolation comes about in that healthy people do not enjoy relationships with those making unwise choices. This wisdom is imparted to clients through story telling and role modeling. These are not magical interventions, as Red Road therapist Black Elk noted (Black Elk & Lyon, 1991). Even the most well communicated lesson can be blocked out and ignored. It is important to get to the point where the clients are comfortable and willing to risk and share their own stories and pain (Black Elk & Lyon, 1991). The role of the Red Road counselor is to assist clients in seeing their hurt and then

give them permission to feel it. Their hurt is clear, but sharing it so it does not sound terrible is the barrier. “American Indians can endure pain and [even] when they finally start sharing, there will be no emotions,” wrote Standing Crow (1998, p.12).

#### Four Areas of Balance

Because the Native American culture sees that everything in life is inter-connected and exists in a circle, it is important to keep everything in balance. Four areas of balance, physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual selves, are taught to clients and identified as equal parts of the whole. Activities to encourage taking personal inventory of the self are facilitated in hopes to bring about awareness of inconsistencies (Belmont, personal communication, May 5, 1995).

Rehabilitation is often associated with healing in substance abuse. Habilitation is the preferred expression used by the Red Road since it is not the goal to restore the client to the original unbalanced condition. Physically, the body of an adolescent substance abuse client is in a state of stress. To combat this stress, self-care skills are taught. Emotionally, many substance abuse clients are out of balance as they transfer and displace their suppressed pain. Conversely, this is where healing through feeling brings about the needed change and balance. Mentally, negative coping mechanisms and inconsistencies in living dominate the client’s life style. These coping mechanisms and inconsistencies are searched out, identified, and the client is assisted in alleviating them (Lakota Concepts, 1991). Spiritually, both adolescent and older clients may have escaped into rituals trying to find the answers but got lost and frustrated in the dogma. Such spiritual short cuts are

identified as the errors that the Red Road journey rejects. Instead, the client must be taught to experience the spiritual journey (Hammerschlag, 1985).

As clients undergo treatment and are assisted in their self inventory of identifying inconsistencies and where balance is needed, specific crooked arrows are acknowledged and honored as teachers if the denial of their existence is expelled. The crooked arrows include self-centeredness, fear, dependency, denial, expectations, stress, and depression. By acknowledging these crooked arrows, their destructive potential is combated and turned around to be tools of healing (Blackwolf Jones & Jones, 1995).

Clients on the Red Road are helped to replace their identified crooked arrows with the straight arrows of the Spirit World. When this process is complete, the ultimate goal of therapy has been reached. This can be a challenge with substance abusing adolescents since the crooked arrows probably have dominated their world. Learning to come to Self is the first arrow that should arm the quiver. Coming to Self includes self discovery with the mind's eye. After self discovery comes the second arrow of befriending the Self. This is often a great challenge since unpleasant qualities exist in each individual. In order to befriend the Self, acceptance must be present. This includes acceptance of the good and bad as well as seeing value in the creation of the Great Spirit. However, whereas accepting the Self does not mean wanting to keep the unhealthy aspects of the Self, these negative points are still recognized (Blackwolf Jones & Jones, 1995).

The fifth arrow of becoming Self is similar to the more familiar term of self-actualization. That is the individual learns to live an authentic life consistent with his or her own beliefs. The sixth arrow of loving the Self involves loving and appreciating each

part. In recognition of each part, a celebration of Self is the seventh arrow to be added to the quiver. After this journey has been traveled, it is time to share the Self and that wisdom with others (Blackwolf Jones & Jones, 1995).

Gifts from the Creator are identified by the Red Road therapist as clients are told and modeled how they can live with honor. Choosing to view life with both hard and soft eyes is a skill or gift the Creator bestows which enables wisdom through analyzing information. Visions and dreams are other gifts that can be sought through prayer and the many ceremonies identified previously in this paper (Standing Crow, 1998).

#### At Life's Completion

The Red Road is traveled through ensuring a balance through living cultural traditions close to the Creator. It is, therefore, a continuous life journey. This journey of healing should be a way of life for more than just Native American adolescent substance abusers. It should transcend to everyone wanting to live healthy lives (HeavyRunner & Morris, 1997). As Thin Elk stated, "Healing is a way of life for all Native Americans who understand and live their cultural traditions and values (Arbogast, 1995, p. 319).

Becoming whole in oneself and preparing to go home to the Creator with what is learned in this life is the spiritual perspective that Red Road counselors share with their clients. This can only be done through action and change, facilitated through communication and understanding on the part of the therapist (Standing Crow, 1998).

#### Conclusion

Adhering to the Red Road approach is paradoxically natural and challenging. Looking at one's self and honestly assessing what is there is a challenging process.

Working to establish the valued balance of the emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual self involves pain, energy, and vulnerability. However, by utilizing the Creator as power and learning from those who have gone through the healing, adolescents with addiction issues can themselves travel the same healing journey (Belmont, personal communication, May 5, 1995).

Although it is designed for the Native American client, the journey is beginning to be traveled by other cultures as well. For example, persons from Germany are paying Red Road therapists to travel to their country and share their wisdom with groups there. But not anyone with a basic knowledge of Native American spirituality can be a Red Road counselor. To lead someone else down the Native American path of healing, the road must have been traveled first so the territory is familiar (Standing Crow, personal communication, June 23, 1998). According to Belmont, elder and Red Road counselor/trainer for the National Association for Native American Children of Alcoholics, a counselor does not have to have experienced the exact same pain as the client. But the counselor should know the way out of that pain and not be afraid to share that pain with the client (Belmont, personal communication, May 5, 1995).

It is the relationship between the client and counselor that elicits the success in the journey of healing and the desired balance. However, this relationship goes beyond the personal and therapeutic relationship to the relationship involving the Creator and the interconnected world around. After learning, through self-awareness and ceremony, to respect oneself and care for the gift of life that the Creator bestows, the Red Road journey

takes the traveler to the point of respecting this world around (Blackwolf Jones & Jones, 1995).

Thin Elk, the founder of the Red Road, stated that the Red Road was the journey once taken by all Native Americans (Arbogast, 1995). But it has been a journey lost to alcoholism and other disease. Thin Elk noted that within the Native American culture there still lies the healing mechanisms of prayer. In his eyes, healing has not been lost by the Native American. It remains for both Native Americans and non-Natives who understand or wish to understand and live the cultural traditions and values the Red Road has to offer (Arbogast, 1995).

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