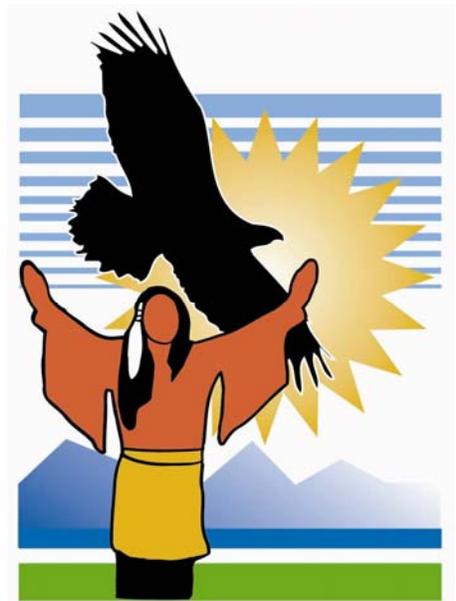


(RHS) CULTURAL FRAMEWORK
FEBRUARY 2005



FIRST NATIONS REGIONAL LONGITUDINAL HEALTH SURVEY (RHS) CULTURAL FRAMEWORK¹

Indigenous Intelligence. Have We Lost Our Indigenous Mind?

Indigenous intelligence is the wise and conscientious embodiment of exemplary knowledge and the use of this knowledge in a good, beneficial and meaningful way. Within whatever world view one is operating intelligence has to do with more than the acquisition of knowledge and the mental manipulation of thoughts and ideas; intelligence has to do with activating knowledge into something useable within a system that is charged with meaning.

Intelligence has been defined for us through the eyes of the Euro-American psychological and scientific culture. Its definition is limited in its application and understanding. What we have been pursuing as Indigenous people, since our involvement in education in the contemporary experience, is attempting to measure up to their definition of intelligence. To be as productive as they are, as successful as they are, to be as intelligent as they are. In doing so, we have lost the encompassing nature of our definition of intelligence - *Indigenous intelligence*.

We cannot talk about being an intelligent person without knowledge of and access to all the levels of our intelligence capacity - i.e., the intelligence of the body, the mind, heart and spirit. The intelligence of the mind, for instance, does not operate to its fullest creative, discriminating, and encompassing potential without its active partnership with the intelligence of the heart.

We cannot be intelligent, act or think intelligently unless we are able to attach our Indigenous concepts, our way of being and Indigenous knowledge to our connectedness and relationship with everything else. Our *responsibility* within that all-inclusive relationship *is an act of intelligence*. Whether it is in the name of providing an economic base, pioneering some great invention, or furnishing a breakthrough for the future, if our use of our knowledge and our approach disturbs or disrupts the balance and harmony the life around us it cannot be considered an intelligent act, according to Indigenous standards of intelligence.

Our present day thinking is inclusive of the legacy of our ancestors and of what our ancestors are waiting for us to do. Our thoughts also include the future generations, recognizing that they are already looking back toward us with the awareness that our decisions and our actions are impacting them. It is a living past, a living future, and we are the living connection in between. Indigenous intelligence is active on all these levels.

Using Indigenous Intelligence within a Linear Worldview

The prevailing and dominating worldview that surrounds us today and to which we are compelled to respond is one that is narrow in its vision, exclusive and detached in relating to the total environment, analytical and deductive in its perception and thinking, linear in its doing, and, hierarchical and competitive in its management of the field of activity.

By Indigenous standards of *intelligence*, the accepted limitations to perception, the lack of consideration and caring for the total environment, the restrictions of thinking to narrow confines of cerebral activity, and the confinement to narrowly defined boundaries in the rational, scientific paradigm of the Euro-western tradition, are ways of seeing, relating, thinking, and doing that are deficient in most of the qualities of higher *intelligence*.

Choosing to see and accept as reality only that which can be validated by the five senses, is not an *intelligent* way of seeing. Adopting and forwarding a way of living that is destructive of the environment and upsets the balance of life itself, is not an *intelligent* way of being. Opting for a worldview that closes the avenues to the counsel and wisdom of the heart and the spirit is to choose a paradigm that deliberately retards the total capacity of human *intelligence*.

The degree to which we, as Indigenous people, have adapted to and adopted this way of seeing, relating, thinking, and doing is proportionate to the degree to which we have limited the true potential of our total *Indigenous*

¹ Jim Dumont, First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (RHS) Cultural Framework, February 2005.

Intelligence. We do have a choice, and that choice is to validate our own worldview and the *intelligence* that it advances.

Indigenous Intelligence - A Unique Way of Being

So, how would we begin to attempt to define *Indigenous* intelligence. If we make a start at it, perhaps we can put our collective intelligence to work and build a description of Indigenous intelligence that embraces the total breadth and depth of our way of being. Let's start with some *key concepts*:

- Indigenous Centeredness
- Indigenous Consciousness
- Indigenous Capacity for Total Responsiveness
- Multi-Faculty Responsiveness (Spirit, Heart, Mind, Body)
- Responsiveness and Connectedness to the Collective Whole
- Responsiveness and Connectedness to the Total Environment
- Indigenous Value-based Seeing, Relating, Knowing & Doing

The concept of ***Indigenous centeredness*** means being centered securely, comfortably, and confidently within the Indigenous worldview, knowingly and intentionally embracing the Indigenous perspective and the Indigenous way of life. Acting from Indigenous centeredness means that one affirms, asserts, and advances Indigenous seeing, relating, thinking and doing as being inherent and central to the Indigenous ways of knowing.

The concept of ***Indigenous consciousness*** affirms and is motivated by the primary and encompassing nature of Indigenous awareness, thought, knowledge and conceptualization in all aspects of seeing, feeling, knowing, and doing. Very simply, it means being totally consciousness at all levels of conscious sensing, knowing, and experiencing - from a place of Indigenous identity, Indigenous thinking, Indigenous knowledge base, and Indigenous way of being.

The concept of ***Indigenous capacity for total responsiveness*** recognizes that we function from all the levels of our being - spirit, heart, mind, and body. The ability to do so is an indication of a high degree intelligence. The Indigenous unique competence and intelligent expression, mastery, and creative aptitude is a multi-faculty response from all levels of being.

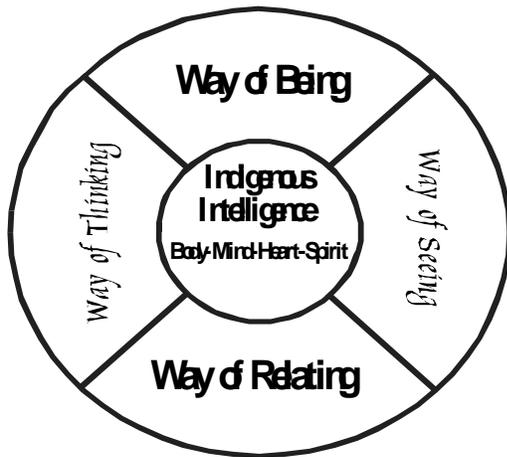
The concept of ***connectedness to the collective whole*** means collective consciousness - but recognizes that this is a cultural predisposition based in a value system that places connectedness and responsiveness to the collective whole at a high place in the priority of values. Individual learning, creativity & innovative achievement are intelligent accomplishments when they benefit and advance the collective whole.

The concept of ***connectedness to the total environment*** places the human person in direct and complete relationship to the total environment - a relationship that is all-inclusive, personal and reciprocal. Individual learning, creativity, innovative achievement, survivability, and attainment of quality of being are intelligent accomplishments when they are responsive to, respect, benefit and advance the total environment.

The concept of ***Indigenous value-based seeing, relating, knowing and doing*** means that the intelligent Indigenous person operates from out of the core psychology or value system of Kindness, Honesty, Sharing, Strength, Respect, Wisdom, and Harmony.

Indigenous Intelligence - Body-Mind-Heart-Spirit

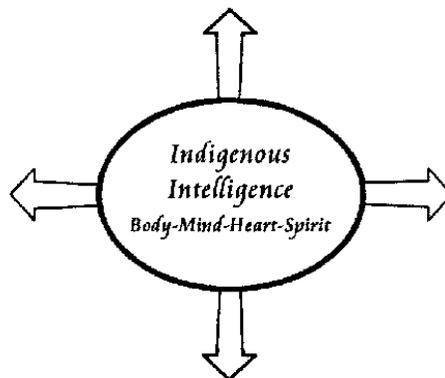
The following diagrams describes the total capacity of *Indigenous Intelligence*:



Indigenous Intelligence

The Indigenous Way of Being is the total response of the total person with the total environment. It is a way of doing that activates the whole person - body, mind, heart and spirit. This way of being and doing generates the finest creative expression and the highest quality of experience of the individual person within the whole family of being and the total environment.

The Indigenous Way of Thinking uses the totality of the mind in its intellectual, intuitive and spiritual capacity as well as sensory and emotional motivation. The Indigenous Way of Knowing involves total-faculty learning and calls on total responsiveness of the total person. It is a way of knowing that is inspired from the heart as well as generated from the mind's intelligence.



The Indigenous Way of Seeing is Spirit-centred. It is a total way of seeing. The Indigenous person has the capacity for "total-vision" which encompasses the whole reality, considers all levels of knowing, is informed by all the senses (physical, emotional, intuitive & spiritual) and maintains the interdependent, interconnected and holistic experience and integrity of the total environment.

The Indigenous Way of Relating is an all-encompassing way of relating to the world that is personal, caring, responsive and sharing. It is inclusive in all beings: human and other-than-human. This way of relating is respectful of the individual and responsive to the integrity of the collective whole.

The Continuum of *Indigenous Intelligence*

Indigenous Intelligence is all of this - exercising the total capacity of body, mind, heart and experience in total responsiveness and total relationship to the whole environment. In addition, the Indigenous reality include not only a responsiveness and a responsibility to the present, but to all of reality - seven generations into the past and seven generations into the future. Our thoughts include those who have walked before us and those who will follow our footprints in future times. The consideration for our decision-making encompasses the determination of our ancestors and the yearning of our grandchildren. The motivations for our actions originate from what our forebears have held in placed and handed forward to us from the past, as well as from the hands of our great-great grandchildren reaching back toward us. *Indigenous intelligence* is inclusive of and responsive to the strings of lives of the generations before and after us.

Acting with Indigenous Intelligence

We need to begin to think, and speak and act from the centre of our Indigenous being, from the centre of our culture and Indigenous way of life. To do this we must become *educated* in our own way of life and the Indigenous knowledge, way of being and acting that flows from it. We should not be activating major change in our communities, instituting governmental formulas and social organizations, initiating potentially culture-changing development projects without being well educated in our Indigenous way of being and able to do it from our own traditions. Taking intelligent action has to be informed and driven by our Indigenous culture, traditions and our way of life.

We can gather together as truly Indigenous scholars, leaders and agents of change and use our Indigenous intelligence. We can collectively share with one another and create an understanding amongst ourselves of what is Indigenous intelligence and how our traditions, our way of life, knowledge, and foundations of belief speak to us today and to our future. Our ancestors handed this forward to us so that we would have it to live by in our time. Included in this bundle from the past is the gift of *Indigenous intelligence*. We can reclaim it and begin to activate it in all of its quality and potential. We will then be prepared to hand it to our young people and our grandchildren who will move into the future acting with the fullest capacity of Indigenous intelligence.

Since we necessarily function within Euro-Western system today, and are very much affected by it, we need to have some understanding of the essential differences between the two ways of understanding our reality, our worldview. The following is a comparison of the two value systems that will help to shed light on what we are working with here in trying to create a cultural framework while operating in and affected by a very different view of the world.

Divergent Value Systems

In an over-all sense the primary disposition of the Native person compared to the Euro-North American appears to be fundamentally different, if not essentially divergent. Vision is the primary generator of the Native value system. Vision is spirit-centered and is equivalent to wholeness. Vision/wholeness recognizes the inter-connectedness of all things and the totality of its interrelationship. Because of this, vision inherently generates an attitude of respect. Respect conditions all other values thus engendering a unique value system with a unique interpretation and prioritizing of each value. From this inherent perspective of wholeness comes a special way of seeing the world - one that has the innate capacity for holistic or "total vision". With this ability to see beyond the boundaries of the physical and the capacity for all-around, circular vision comes respect: respect for creation, respect for knowledge and wisdom, respect for the dignity, equality and freedom of others (including other-than-human persons), respect for the quality of life and the spirit in all things, respect for the "mysterious".

Where the Indigenous North American is governed in all things by the primary motivators of *vision* and *respect*, the Euro-North American's primary motivators are best described as *movement* and *effective behavior*. Because of this, the "White Brother" will interpret and prioritize major values differently than the "Red Brother". This will, in turn, make a difference in how each one will function in interrelationships, in the environment, and how each will generate institutions, structures or standards to foster and maintain good and orderly interaction, governance, and the achievement of well-being.

Over time and history, from the premises of movement/activity and because of a preference toward effective behavior, the "Western person" has tended to be more disposed to exhibit such behavior as competitiveness, manipulative tendencies in interrelating, objectification, and separation of oneself from one's environment. This is seen in aggressive assertiveness, active posturing in response to situations, inclination toward confrontational approaches to problem-solving, being achievement oriented or goal oriented, verbal excessiveness, external excitement and tension. From the premises of *vision* and *respect*, on the other hand, the Native person will be more

disposed to exhibit such behaviors as collaborativeness, tendencies toward non-interference in interrelating, humbleness in being interconnected with everything else, more assenting or compliant in affirmative action, cautious observation before responding to situations, avoidance/withdrawal or acquiescent posturing in approaching problems, personal orientation and self-discipline, moderation in speech, and an external tranquility.

As we relate this to values that pertain to ways of relating to one another, to the environment, to the community or between nations, we find sets of divergent values, which not only reveal the conflict in Native and non-Native interactions, but show the contradictions in attitudes and approaches to governance, to achieving quality of being, relating to the land as well as to the environment.

The following is a table of some basic contrasts in these values:

<u>Indigenous</u>	vs	<u>Euro-Western</u>
Inclusive	vs	Exclusive
Cooperative	vs	Competitive
Circular	vs	Linear
Collective	vs	Individualistic
Egalitarian	vs	Hierarchical
Harmony/Balance	vs	Progressive/Exploitive
Co-Existence	vs	Domination
Spirit-Centered	vs	Human-Centered
Interconnected	vs	Detached
Interrelated	vs	Independent

Below is a comparison of these values, considered in relationship to one another:

Inclusion, as a Native value, refers to the all-inclusive perception of the total environment. The Native person regards as persons, as autonomous, sentient and purposeful beings, all of the natural world. The Earth family is inclusive of all spirits, of all “persons”, of all nature, the youngest member of this family being the “human person”.

Exclusion, on the other hand, refers to the restriction to the category of “persons” of those regarded as human. The human being is separate and distinct from any kinship with the other-than-human beings that make up the total environment, and in fact, is raised to a superior class above them.

Cooperation is key to ensuring and building complementary patterns of behaviour where sharing and harmonious inter-relationships are highly valued. Respect for the mutuality, equality and autonomy of other “persons” encourages compatible, accommodative and integrative behaviour in interrelationship. The autonomy of the individual is highly respected, but within the context of the collective whole.

Competition recognizes the autonomy of the individual, but places this value above the collective. The right of individual personal pursuit allows for a competitive mode of behaviour where the fittest succeeds. In the Euro-Western worldview this is further amplified by placing “man” at the pinnacle of evolutionary achievement and separate from the rest of the environment.

Circularity refers to the all-encompassing nature of the Native worldview that is inclusive of all that makes up the total ecology of the sphere of spiritual, human and environmental relationship. This concept, as a value, affirms the cyclical nature of reality where all things move within a circular, regenerative pattern that is comprehensively interconnected and interdependent.

The **Linear** perspective, as a value, proposes that all things build upon one another from the most rudimentary to the most complex in a predictable cause-effect fashion. This view is usually inconsistent with the organic nature of life and living relationships and leads to a disregard for the complexity of the interconnected, interrelated character and integrity of the environment and human experience.

Egalitarian means that the total ecology of life and of interrelationship is ordered in such a way that there is an equality among all persons and species, and that everything shares in the environmental balance of life equally. This view promotes the attitude of cooperative and caring co-existence that guarantees the survival and achievement of a quality of life among all persons.

The **Hierarchical** view advocates that the total ecology of life and inter-relationship is ordered in such a way that the most “complex” forms have achieved a superior state of being from the “lower” forms and therefore dominate the rest, and have attained independence from them. This view, which champions an ideal of “survival of the fittest”, is often discordant with the interconnectedness of the eco-system and of human relations, and results in “human” assault on the environment and judgement of those who are different - having complete disregard for the interdependence and harmony fundamental to the natural and human world.

Harmony is a central value of the Native worldview that presupposes that all of life consciously cares for one another and, while respecting individual autonomy, strives to achieve and maintain an interrelationship that assures quality of life for the collective whole. **Balance**, is a fundamental value within the Native view of reality which fosters a view where the dynamic character of the environment and relationship is such that it always strives to maintain an equilibrium and symmetry in all aspects of the total economy of its ecology.

Progressiveness signifies a system of belief that upholds that “growth is progress” - we are moving incrementally toward better and greater things. This view tends to ignore the qualities of interdependence and harmonious interrelationship, and assumes the posture of: the greater the magnitude of growth, the closer we are to the ideal, or, “the more we have the better we are”. It then tends to be **Exploitive** of the environment and of those who are regarded as “lesser” species, as well as disregarding persons who are seen as impediments to progressive development.

Co-Existence is the belief that we must live alongside and in harmonious interaction with others in order to achieve the maximum quality of life. In the Native view this includes co-existence with other-than-human persons as well as with human persons. Co-existence recognizes the autonomy of each “person” as well as the integrity of the whole.

Domination operates on the principle of the independence of the human species from the rest of the environment and advancement beyond other-than-human beings. As well, human persons who are not the same or deemed to be less developed by accepted standards, are regarded as inferior and subordinate. Other species in the environment are subservient to the human being and manipulation of the environment is encouraged for the greatest benefit of humankind.

Spirit-Centered, as a primary Native value, presupposes the centrality and prime importance of the spirit in all beings of creation. Since all beings are possessed of spirit, then all beings must be accorded equality, respect as “persons”, and a right to life and quality of relationship.

Human-Centered, on the other hand, presupposes that the human person is the highest evolutionary achievement and that the development of consciousness, thought, intention and feeling is unique to the human realm. Humans alone are possessed of soul or spirit and worthy of the category of “personhood”.

Interconnectedness describes the way in which the Native worldview sees all of nature and the community of human relations as bound together in such a way that each aspect is interdependent, interrelated, and acts cooperatively together as an integrated whole.

Detached, describes a basic belief in the Euro-Western tradition, that various aspects of the natural world and human civilization develop in an ever-evolving fashion to progressively higher and separate categories of being and achievement. The human species is the highest in this scale of evolution within the natural world, and is separate from and superior to the rest of nature. The human being, therefore, must make his own domain separate and protected from an otherwise hostile environment. Amongst human beings, certain people have evolved to higher levels of achievement and civilization than others. The more advanced then forms an elite and separate, superior class.

Interrelated refers to the kinship within which all of nature participates. This view also attributes “personhood” to all the members of the environmental family, and links all together in an interrelationship that is respectful of the worth of all “persons” and is reciprocal and egalitarian in its constitution. This applies equally to the social, political and cultural institutions of human activity, organization, and relationship.

Independence pertains to the valuing of the human person over and above the other beings of the environment and encourages activity, participation and growth that is independent and distinct from the rest of creation. Independence, as a human value, places the rights and privileges of the individual over those of the collective.

Toward Building a RHS Cultural Framework

The meaning of First Nations health and well-being is understood, in its broadest cultural perception, as: “*The total (First Nations) health of the total (First Nations) person within the total (First Nations) environment*”.

Total Health is all aspects and components of health and well-being seen as integrally interconnected with one another within an inclusive and inter-related and interactive web of life and living.

Total Person is inclusive of all levels of personhood – understood to be body, mind, heart and spirit:

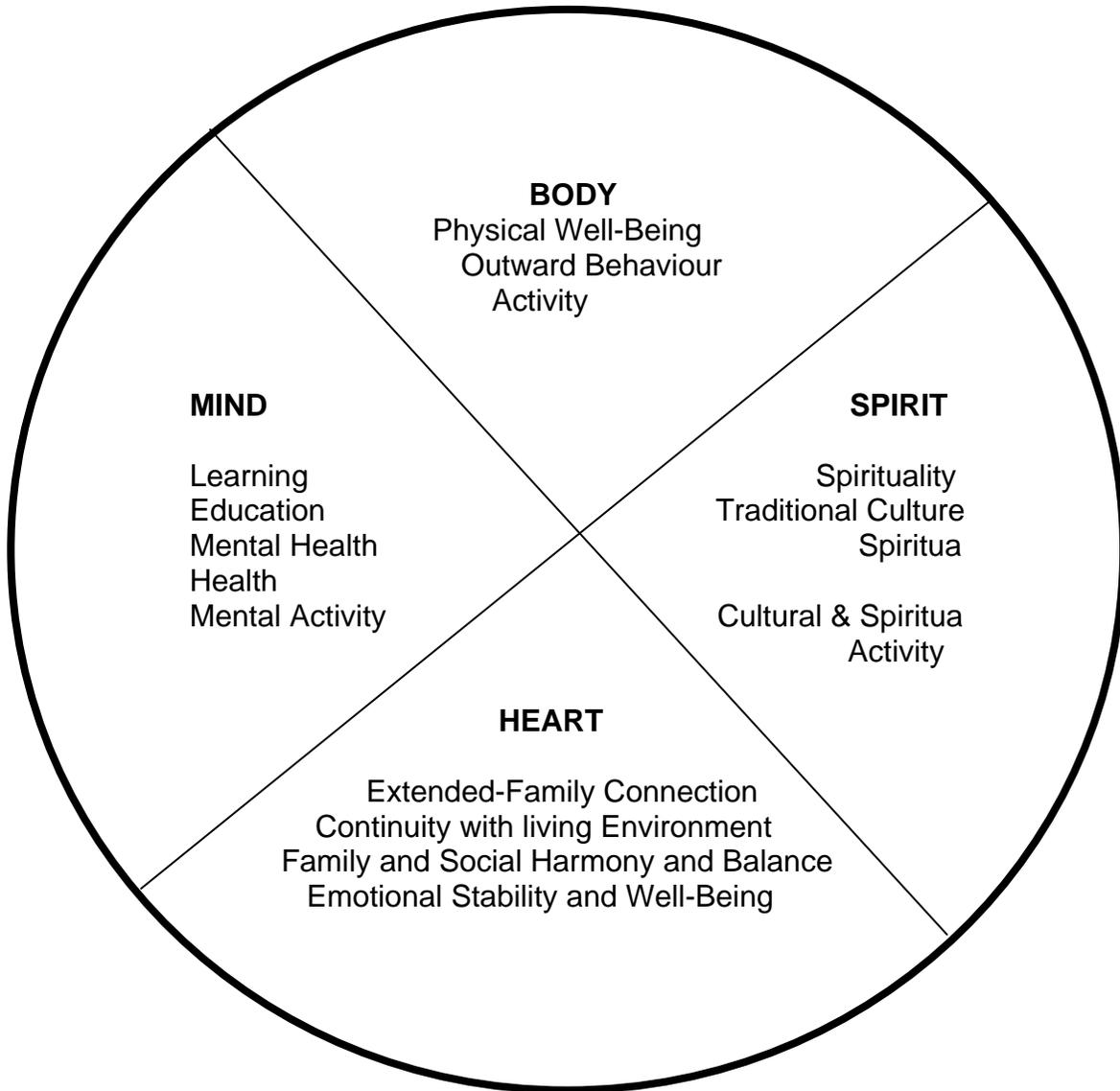
- physical health, mental health, emotional health, spiritual health;
- healthy behaviour and life style, healthy mental function, cultural continuity with the past, as well as future opportunity;
- healthy connection to culture, healthy home life, community life, extended family connection, and, a healthy spirituality as an First Nations person.

Total Environment means a healthy connection and relationship with the living environment – this being constituted of the land, natural environment, cultural environment, context of activity, community, family, and the everyday living environment.

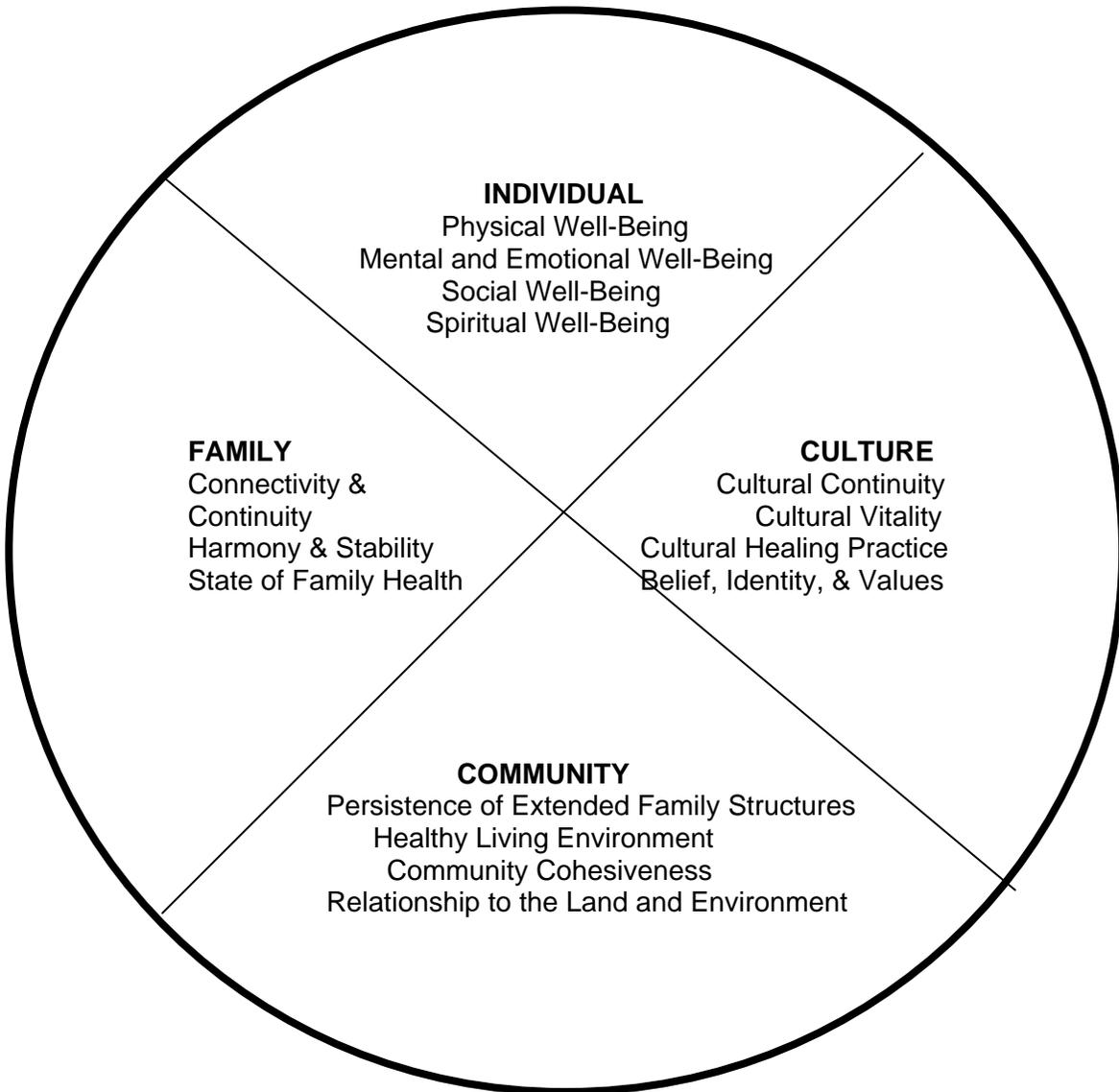
Given this “cultural” definition of health and the RHS mandate to achieve the “collective empowerment of First Nations individuals and communities in matters of health”, the task before us is to develop an effective and workable cultural framework that will achieve both a culturally informed and culturally driven process of data collection and that will provide the means for appropriately interpreting information collected and presenting it back to the communities in ways that are usable and that engender “collective empowerment”, while leading to community-based approaches to improving and strengthening First Nations health and wellness. In addition to this is the task of making such a framework applicable to the present way in which data was collected and useful to the presentation of information and knowledge of health and well-being as collected meaningful to First Nations peoples and communities.

A cultural framework would need to consider “health” in ways that are inclusive of the “total” person, “total” health, and “total” environment as seen the following examples:

**TOTAL HEALTH OF THE TOTAL PERSON SET WITHIN
A 4-DIRECTIONAL MODEL**



**COMPONENTS OF TOTAL ENVIRONMENT SEEN
WITHIN A 4-DIRECTIONAL MODEL**



INGREDIENTS FOR A HEALTHY INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

Visioning a whole and healthy Indigenous community in all the areas of body, mind, heart and spirit, as well as in the areas of environment, relationship and empowerment, produces a list of “ingredients for a health Indigenous community” such as the following:

Physical Well Being

- Useful and productive life to an old age
- General physical wellness
- Balanced weight appropriate to age and height
- Active physical participation
- Long life expectancy
- Community support and encouragement of healthy physical activity
- Active physical involvement in procuring environmental resources

Mental Well Being

- Self-directed and creative learning
- Learning guided by elders, vision and creative learning
- Learning directly linked to survival and procurement of quality of life
- Cultural connectivity
- Continuity with cultural and historical past
- Culturally connected and meaningful/purposeful education and learning
- Community supported culture-based education

Emotional Well Being

- Emotions and feelings in balance with individual’s life events
- Strong self-esteem related to strong cultural identity
- Pride in heritage
- Self-confidence and self-empowerment
- Community recognition at important stages of life path
- Community is empowered and encourages active community involvement
- Community support for youth involvement and youth achievement
- Community support for elder participation in community events

Way of Living

-
- Living productively
- Living actively
- Living a balanced life
- Living a harmonious lifestyle
- Living meaningfully
- Living hopefully
- Living safely

Harmony

- With family
- With community
- With others
- With land
- With environment

Relationship

- Strong connection to extended family and/or clan relationship
- Interdependence within overall fabric of community
- Interdependence within and with the environment/creation
- People highly active on the land and everyday interaction with environment
- Land and resources are held as relatives and sacred life forms

Sovereignty

- Control over forces affecting one's everyday life
- Control over means of one's livelihood
- Control over those things that affect one's health
- Community control over forces governing community life
- Community control over means of livelihood of its members
- Community control over ways of achieving health for its members
- Community control over the future
- Economy and significant 'wealth' is being generated within territory
- Every one has full access to all health services and the essential health services are generated from within the community

Culture

- Connection and continuity with the cultural past
- Healthy and vibrant Indigenous culture
- Continuity with the Indigenous historical past
- Meaningful/successful use of cultural healing practices in achieving health
- Significant and active cultural elder contingent
- Active cultural institutions and spiritual traditions
- Strength of language base/active retrieval of the language
- Respect for the land and environment, in keeping with cultural principles

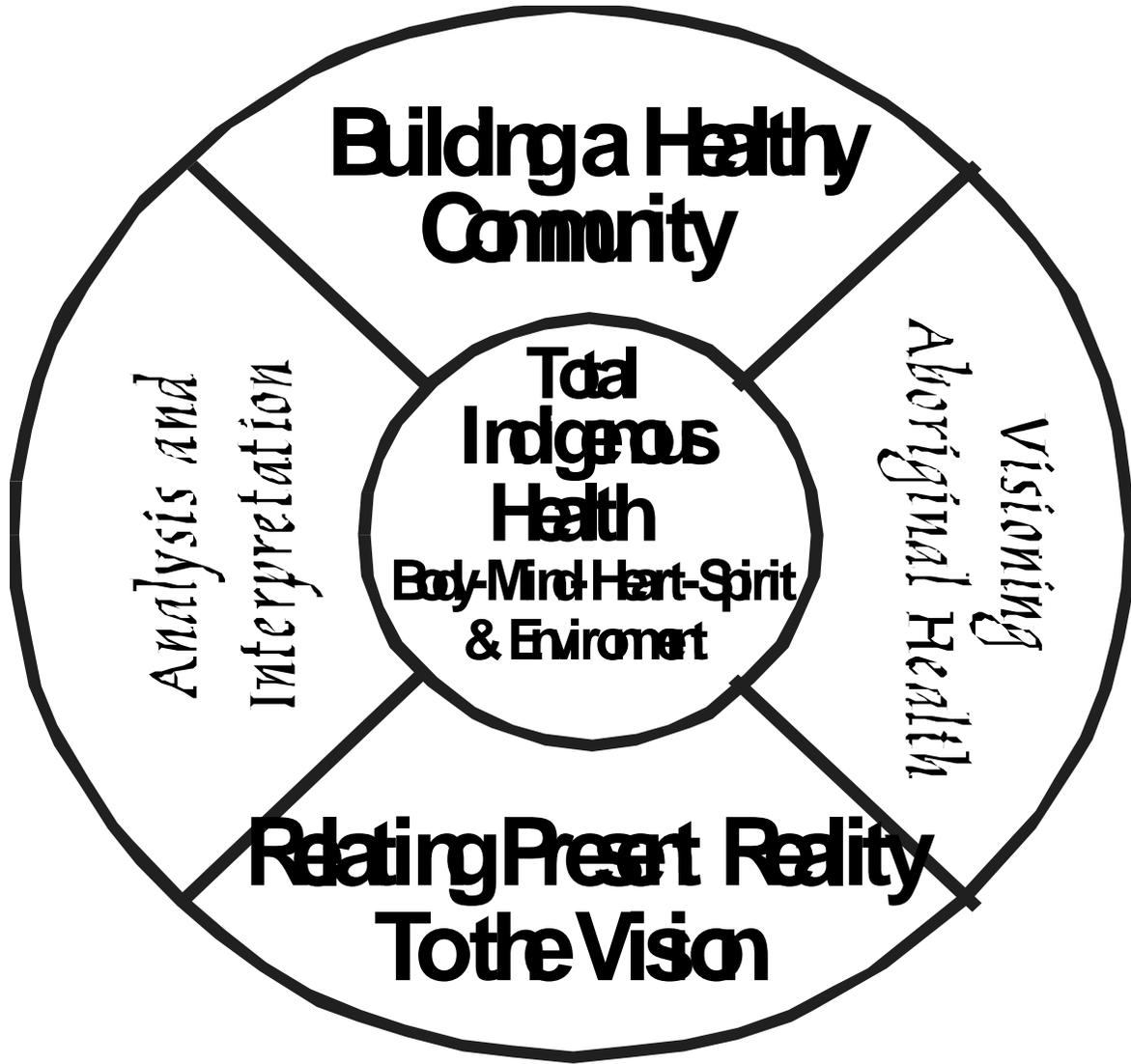
Environment

- Connection and active participation with the natural environment
- Continuity with the history of the land and the environment
- A culturally appropriate, healthy and safe living environment
- A healthy eco-system
- A harmonious, sustainable relationship with the natural environment
- Land and resources are held as sacred life forms and as relations in the cycle of life.
- Cultural standards direct all land and resources use

When asked to envision a healthy Indigenous community, individuals of First Nations would desire similar conditions:

- I envision our community being free of major diseases
- I envision our community providing all our health services
- I envision the members of our community being in good physical condition and being physically active
- I envision our culture being strong again and directing our lives in all of its aspects
- I envision a time when our language will be strong again and the first language of our community
- I envision our First Nation governing ourselves and providing all of our essential services
- I envision a time when our land and resources will be sufficient to provide for our needs
- I envision a time when we will be living well within a safe, productive and health eco-system
- I envision a community that is made up of strong extended family living in harmony and interdependently with one another
- I envision a community that values and produces/gathers its own natural and healthy foods
- I envision a community that is strong and proud in its culture and heritage
- I envision a community ... and so on.

The Cultural Framework



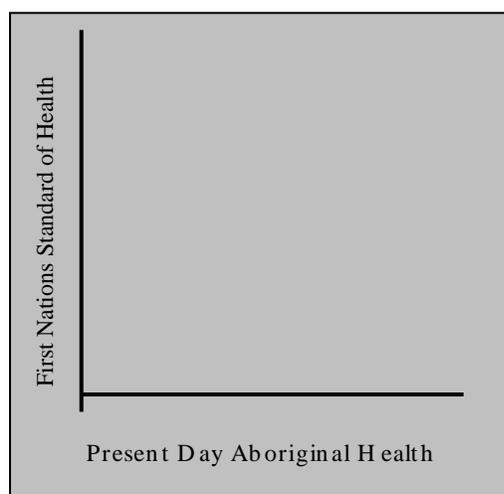
Visioning First Nations Health

In developing a framework that will embody a general and useful survey instrument, the cultural requisite always sets the original *Vision* as primary. Vision is inclusive of all aspect of the total picture in its most positive way of being. Under the present approach as it is applied to measuring the statistical status of health amongst First Nations people and communities, the “norm” is determined from the present state of health as it is revealed through the statistics. The cultural approach assumes that health is the way that things were meant to be which was achieved in the past, and that such a state of health is achievable in the future, i.e., an “ideal” state of health and well being that should be and that could be. As such, Visioning First Nations Health determines the base line from which all things are assessed and measured. It is necessary to determine this “base line” before proceeding to assess deviations from this ideal standard of health or to measure to ways in which we fall short of the total health of the total person in the total environment. Visioning First Nations health looks at the whole picture of First Nations health and well-being, but also considers what the ideal picture of health looks like in each area of health, i.e., for the individual, the family, the community, the life stages of childhood, youth, adult and elder, while respecting the ways that each is inextricably linked to all others.

Relating Present Reality to the Vision

Relating follows, sequentially the process of Visioning. Once the “ideal standard” of health is determined, the ways that our present reality measures up to this “standard” can be studied, catalogued and measured – always against this ideal standard. The First Nations person’s and communities involvement and participation in determining the present day reality of First Nations health and well-being is always necessarily preceded by their involvement and participation in the envisioning of the ideal standard of health that was achieved in the past and can be achieved in the future. This process is quite similar to the way that it has been done in gathering statistics in a manner that is sensitive ve to community involvement and community ownership and control – with the additional requirement that this is being done cognizant of the previously developed ideal standard of health, which is also culturally sensitive, community owned and community controlled. Statistical collection is done in relation to the whole pictur of First Nations health and well-being, and also considers the state of present day health in each area of health, i.e., for the individual, the family, the community, the life stages of childhood, youth, adult and elder, while respecting the ways that each is inextricably linked to all other areas. For instance, in the area of the health of the First Nations person, the person is considered a whole person (body, mind, heart and spirit) and in view of this the information on physical well being would always have to be considered to be directly linked to mental, emotional and spiritual well being. Data collected in the Relating stage should reveal a picture of how the present state of First Nations health compares with the envisioned “ideal standard” of health as pre-determined by the community.

Analysis and Interpretation



Analysis and interpretation of statistical data is measured in relation to a culture-based and community-determined ideal standard of First Nations health. Interpreters of collected data must work toward understanding what statistics are saying to First Nations communities about their state of health as it is measured in relationship to the community’s ideal standard of their own health. This should both enlighten the community as to it’s own achievement or lack thereof toward meeting that standard and point the way toward directions for improvement. This applies to analysis and authors’ interpretation.

Analytical tools will need to be developed to provide this method of interpretation and to be in keeping with the understanding of “total health” where each area of health in related to other areas of health. In the First Nations understanding of health no category is isolated from the other, and each impinges on the other in significant ways. Analysis and interpretation of the data must be

for the community first and must always place the First Nations person and First Nations community/family as the focal and central audience of communication. Furthermore, analysis and interpretation of data should lead into the next phase of the process, which is that of providing the community with insights and directions toward building toward their envisioned standard of total health and well-being.

Building a Healthy First Nations Community

On the basis of the “partnership” ethic that is established with First Nations communities in research, data collection and analysis, this must be reflected in the interpretation of data and must in its communication back to the communities. The interpretation and presentation of the analysis of data must be empowering of First Nations persons, families and communities; that is, it must activate change and help lead toward the building of healing activity by First Nations persons, families, and communities. The fourth phase in the cultural framework is the restoring, re-building, **Building** of a healthy First Nations Community. The fourth stage always looks back to the first stage of Visioning; and so, in the case of Visioning a healthy First Nations community this phase provides an interpretation of data that not only points out the shortcomings but point in the direction actualizing the envisioned healthy community. This is done through providing directions toward change, rebuilding, and improving health and well being in First Nations communities through the report that is produced. It is also accomplished through ensuring the involvement of the community in the communication and understanding of findings. Based on the understanding that there is an ongoing responsibility beyond data collection and analysis to foster community ownership and to involve the community in pursuing directions of building toward an envisioned healthy First Nations community, it is essential when operating within this cultural framework to continue to work with the community toward building a healthy future.