

How Positive Psychology Overlaps with a Culturally-Based Indigenous  
Addictions Treatment Program

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Abstract

Indigenous cultural teachings on well-being continue to be passed on from generation to generation. Research is showing promise in the effectiveness of participating in cultural practices as more First Nations are returning to their culture for healing and recovery in addictions treatment centres. Positive psychology may help explain why. A very brief and general background will be provided on some cultural well-being teachings and on the impacts of history that have had devastating effects on many Indigenous people. Even through historical challenges that affect present day life, more Indigenous people are returning to their cultural ways of healing and living well. This paper will look at positive psychology constructs and theories in the context of supporting the effectiveness of a culturally-based addictions treatment center program and at ways positive psychology can enhance the program.

Keywords: positive psychology, Indigenous teachings, Indigenous wellness framework, addictions treatment, Seven Grandfather teachings

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### **How Positive Psychology Overlaps with an Indigenous Addictions Treatment Program**

The cultural teachings of the Anishinaabe people (a First Nations group) create a connection between physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental well-being that leads one in the direction of wholeness and inner strength. Positive psychology provides a scientifically supported framework for how individuals, groups, and institutions thrive and experience well-being. Cultural teachings of the Anishinaabe people, such as the Seven Grandfather teachings and the Medicine Wheel have endured for centuries (Gundy, 2011). Some foundational positive psychology constructs such as character strengths, mindfulness, hope, resilience, and belonging, may provide scientific support as to why these teachings are effective. To begin, a general background of the history of the Anishinaabe people will be provided, including how the history of the last two hundred years has, and continues to impact the well-being of Indigenous Nations people. Why and when the Anishinaabe people came to return to more of their cultural teachings, as a shift toward healing, will be described in the context of the treatment program at Ngwaagan Gamig Recovery Centre, a residential addictions treatment center operating on a reserve (reservation) in Northern Ontario. In addition to the history of the Anishinaabe people and a description of some important cultural teachings, this paper will include a brief history of positive psychology and a discussion of the overlap between Anishinaabe cultural activities in this particular treatment program and positive psychology interventions. This paper will also look at ways that positive psychology can augment the addictions treatment program at Ngwaagan Gamig Recovery Centre Inc.

Indigenous cultures and traditions have endured for generations and are recognized as essential and foundational to the well-being of its people (Coyhis & Simonelli, 2008). Positive psychology research can help explain why.

## **Background**

While there are many variations for the definition of culture; for the purposes of this paper, the term Anishinaabe culture is being used to refer to one sector of a group of Indigenous people; more specifically, to those on Manitoulin Island residing on the Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve, in Ontario, Canada. Other terms such as Indigenous or Native or Native American are being used interchangeably with reference to Native people or the Anishinaabe people. This by no means is saying Anishinaabe culture is the same as culture in other Indigenous groups, or Indigenous people overall, nor generalized to other Anishinaabe people within the same territory or elsewhere. It is understood that cultural teachings, values, beliefs are shared with others in different settings and capacities and may differ or even vary from person to person, within one's own families, and within communities (Bear, 2014; Garrett et al., 2016).

## **Creation Story**

Much of the history of Anishinaabe people was passed on orally from generation to generation or crafted through mediums like scrolls or wampum belts. *The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway*, by Edward Benton-Banai (1988) is one of the most renowned written accounts of the teachings and stories of the Anishinaabe people (one of many Indigenous groups). It was written with the intent of encouraging Indigenous people, to learn about and return to their original teachings in order to reengage in a way of life that includes harmony with creation, and a clear path to well-being and a healthy future (Benton-Banai, 1988).

It is said from that from time immemorial, the Indigenous people have lived with the land known to them as "turtle island" (North America). The Anishinaabe Creation story begins with the Mother Earth being created along with her family, the Father Sky, the Grandmother Moon, and the Grandfather Sun. The Earth was created with four directions, East, South, West, and

North with each direction representing sections and the gifts of the medicine wheel. The Creator set all living beings on the earth, such as the swimmers (fish), the four-leggeds (animals), plants and insects, each to live in harmony on the earth according to their original purpose. “Gitche Manito (Creator) took the four parts of Mother Earth and blew each of their spirits into the Sacred Shell creating man” (Benton-Banai, 1988, pp. 2-3). From this original man, came all of the tribes, including the Anishinaabe people and is the reason for a sense of kinship among the tribes. The Original man was responsible for naming all that Gitche Manito had created. Original man understood that all living things had a purpose and named them accordingly. While conducting this task, Original man learned about the cycles of the seasons and the never-ending cycles of life. He identified medicine plants and natural items that could be used for tools, dyes, sewing, and for food (Benton-Banai, 1988).

As Original man met with Grandmother Moon, Mother Earth, and Father Sky, he learned he must use his mind to live in his environment and interact with the environment in order to experience continuous growth (Benton-Banai, 1988). For example, he learned about fire, and the need to respect fire as it could both help and harm. Many things like fire, have the same helpful and harmful qualities. He learned that he must actively search for knowledge, because knowledge would not seek him. He learned that he needed to discern when to have faith in the Creator’s plan and when he should seek his own plan (Benton-Banai, 1988).

Original man met a fire-keeper’s daughter with whom he asked for and received blessings for a happy life together. They had four sons who, when they were grown, were sent to each of the four directions. There, they met each of the Grandfathers of that direction, each of which represented different virtues and spiritual elements. Each of the grandfathers gifted the young man with a medicine (a medicinal element that contributed to each direction specific type

of well-being: emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental), an animal helper, and teachings of that particular direction. The four sons married, and as the populations grew, there were groups of people thriving in all four directions because they possessed all they needed to learn and grow (Benton-Banai, 1988).

### **Cultural Approaches to Well-being**

#### **The Seven Grandfather Teachings**

The Seven Grandfather teachings, a set of values for living well that are used even today, were sent to the people by Creator, during a time when the people's well-being was diminishing (Benton-Banai, 1988). According to this account, a small child was chosen to spend his lifetime circling the earth and receiving the teaching of seven spiritual grandfathers. When he returned he bestowed upon the people the gift of the Seven Grandfather teachings. In addition, he taught them about the importance of the balance between the physical and the spiritual being, and the need to use and strengthen their spirit as well as use and strengthen their physical being (Benton-Banai, 1988).

The Seven Grandfather teachings are values that guide one's conduct and behaviour toward self-discovery, healthy living and relationships. They serve as a guide for how to live in harmony with all of Creation. Each of the Seven Grandfathers teachings also has an opposite value; for instance, love vs. hate, bravery versus cowardice – which serve as a constant reminder to be mindful to stay in balance (Benton-Banai, 1988).

Wisdom - To cherish knowledge is to know wisdom.

Love - To know love is to know peace.

Respect - Respect is to honor all Creation.

Bravery - To face the foe with integrity.



Honesty - In facing a situation is to be brave.

Humility - Humility is to know yourself as a sacred part of creation

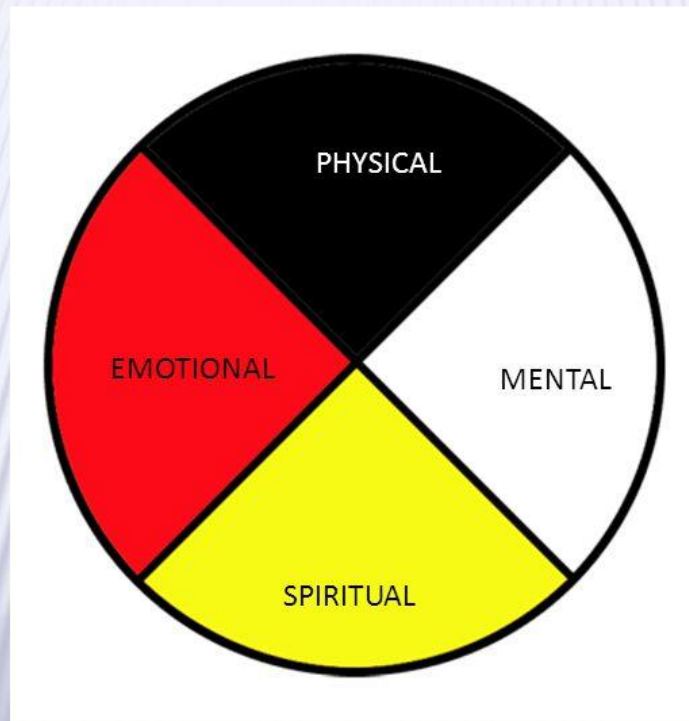
Truth - To know all of these things. (Benton-Banai, 1988, p. 64)

### **The Medicine Wheel**

There are many uses and speculations about the use of medicine wheels (Dapice, 2006; Thomason, 2013). For the purposes of this paper, the term Medicine Wheel will reflect a basic and theoretical approach to living well and in balance, and is not intended to in any way to take away from the significance of any meaning of the understanding or use of the medicine wheels from any culture, tribe, use, or purpose.

From an Anishinaabe perspective, living well is living in balance with the spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical aspects of one's self, surrounded by family, community, and Nation. Dapice (2006) discusses the medicine wheel framework, as a symbol of wholeness, a way to view the perspectives of balance from the point of view of Indigenous people. The Medicine Wheel, is a circle divided into four quadrants symbolizing the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual (refer to Figure 1).

# MEDICINE WHEEL



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*Figure 1. Medicine Wheel*

There may also be other multidimensional circles surrounding the Medicine Wheel symbolizing relationships to family, community, and Nation. For wellness, any intervention conducted or action taken in efforts to achieve wellness impacts the other aspects of the wheel, therefore one has to consider also, the inter-relatedness of each section of the wheel when seeking to achieve optimal living (Hill, 2008; Hodge, Limb, & Cross, 2009). Furthermore, in order to maintain wellness, one engages in a continuous process of self-awareness (Hill, 2008).

### **Impacts of history**

The Anishinaabe people migrated from the east coast of North America through the St. Lawrence Seaway to “where the food grows on water,” settling at Madeleine Island, south west

of Lake Superior in the fourteenth century (Benton-Banai, 1988, p. 100). Their first contact with White people came about in 1544 with the migration of French, Dutch and English colonists from Europe. Following this contact, and in line with their own prophecies, came a period of severe hardships. Exposure to foreign diseases caused a large number of deaths, and contact with Christian religion caused friction between the Church and the beliefs that guided the Anishinaabe way of life (Benton-Banai, 1988).

In the 1600's the Two Row Wampum belt was used as a symbol of the first agreement between Europeans and Native Nations (Hill, 2013). The agreement outlined a commitment on both sides to friendship, peace, and respect of each other's ways of life. It is said that the parties also agreed not to interfere in each other's ways of life (Ogimaa Peltier, personal communication, May 19, 2017). Some years later, the Royal Proclamation of 1763 was issued by King George III of England in what is now known as Canada. Its purpose was to establish a Nation to Nation relationship with Native tribes and to work out land disputes and other community development and business issues (MacKinnon, 2013).

About the same time, in the United States, the government had orchestrated the removal of Native people from their land using treaty agreements and force. When Andrew Jackson became President of the United States he created the Indian Removal Act in 1830, which continued the removal of Native people (Office of the Historian, n.d). In the United States, tribes of Native people were wiped out and forced onto reservations. "Systematic genocide was inflicted on many of the Original People of this hemisphere" (Duran, 2006, p. 7). In what is now known as Canada, the same was happening. These acts resulted in large numbers of deaths of the Native population due to hunger and disease (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

Concurrently, in 1836, in what is now Canada, the Bond Head Treaty was signed which attempted to force the Anishinaabek to move to Manitoulin Island which was set aside as a reserve (Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve, 2010). The government created a subsequent treaty to deal with the increasing pressures of non-Native people who wished to settle onto Manitoulin Island. The McDougall treaty of 1862 ceded all but the eastern side of the island to the Crown which later sold the land to settlers while reserves were set aside for the Indians. The most eastern side of Manitoulin, where the Chiefs did not sign the treaty is now the Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve.

In 1867, Canada became its own country, and nine years later, in 1876, the Canadian Government created the Indian Act (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Since then, the Canadian federal government has been responsible for Aboriginal or “Indian” affairs. It has the authority over how reserves (lands set aside for the use and benefits of the Indians) operate and how members of the band (a term under the Indian Act defined as a group of Indians for which a piece of land had been set aside for their benefit) will be recognized and registered (band membership) (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The Indian Act was legislation that was intended to assimilate the First Nations people into the general population of Canada. The intent of this Act was to regulate an entire race of people, the First people of this land. The Indian Act has been amended over the years. With the amendments, First Nations people have asserted their own jurisdiction in areas such as band citizenship, land use, and leadership election. However, the Act still allows the government to control many aspects of Aboriginal life in some First Nations communities. Indian status registration, land, resources, wills, education, and band administration continue to be controlled by the Canadian Government under the Indian Act regulations. Prior to changes in 1951, any

status Indians earning a university degree, and any woman marrying a non-Native would lose her status as an “Indian” person. Anyone practicing traditional ceremonies or leaving the reserve without a permission pass would go to jail. Between 1879 and 1996, tens of thousands of First Nations children were forced to attend residential schools that were designed to destroy the link between families and to assimilate the people (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Children were penalized for speaking their Native language and practicing their First Nation culture. The schools were not funded adequately to ensure proper education or supervision of the children, leaving the children vulnerable to the horrors of abuse, and the effects of a lack of safety, and isolation from their culture, families, and support for years at a time. Many suffered a great deal of trauma and abuse for which more awareness is becoming known and for which interventions are being created (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

The current legacy of the residential school policy manifests itself through disproportionate numbers of children in the child welfare system, high rates of incarceration, and significantly higher rates of victimization (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The intergenerational trauma extends to next generations, and losses become profound (Duran, Duran, Heart, & Horse-Davis, 1998). Subsequent outcomes of depression and suicide in former students were and are being linked to separation from parents and harsh realities at the school (Elias et al., 2012; Grayshield, Rutherford, Salazar, Mihecoby, & Luna, 2015; Warner, 2003). In her article that compares the health of children who attended residential schools to those who did not, Kasper (2014) found that there were significant adverse health and socioeconomic impacts as adults on those individuals who had attended the residential schools. Former residential students were more likely to still live on the reserve, have negative self-

ratings of overall health, lower income, lesser formal education, and poorer housing (Kasper, 2014). Children of former students also have achieved lower educational levels (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

As the former students became parents, many were without the skills, cultural teachings, and familial experience to parent appropriately. Issues of isolation, neglect, inability to protect, powerlessness, and abuse, continued in later generations. When nurturing, caring, love, support, and community are so important, the existence of generations of families who have been forced to live apart for years explains much of why the First Nations community is facing so many challenges (Warner, 2003).

It was not until 1951, when the Indian Act was amended significantly that some of the restrictions were lifted. More control over education, land and band business was later assumed by many First Nations themselves (Makarenko, 2008). As of 1960, Aboriginal people have been given the right to vote in federal elections without giving up their status as an Indian. As of 1985, women can retain their status regardless of who they marry. Those who had previously lost their Indian status were able to regain it back. However, the status only applied to herself, her children and her grandchildren but not to the subsequent generations beyond that (Makarenko, 2008; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

The continuation of the legacy of the Indian Act, including confinement to a reserve, stripping away the First Nation way of life, language, and identity from generations of people, intergenerational trauma, poverty, substance abuse and addictions, a higher mortality rate, higher rates of violence, suicide, and racism, all explain many of the challenges facing the First Nation community today (Gundy, 2010; Myers, 2007). Elias et al. (2012) found that suicide behaviors were linked to having a parent or grandparent who was a former student at a residential school.

The link between mental health and later generations has a huge impact within communities.

In 2008, the Canadian Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, made a formal apology to Canada's Aboriginal Peoples for the policy of the Indian residential school system that sought to "kill the Indian in the child" (Government of Canada, 2008, para. 1). Through the stories and testimonies of former students which are being shared more openly more often, Canada, the world, and First Nations people themselves are now becoming aware of the extent of intergenerational harm caused by the enforcement of these policies, laws, and regulations.

Generational burdens of systemic challenges, from a history of oppressive legislation, to poor socioeconomic conditions, has resulted in a less than optimal worldview for and of many First Nations people. When considering psychological models and theories, internalized oppression is another significant factor (Duran, 2006). While history is impacting the current realities, and as more research is conducted to explain this legacy, more healing will take place (Elias et al., 2012; Gundy, 2010).

The report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada includes 94 calls to action. The 18<sup>th</sup> call to action is:

A call to the federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal government policies to acknowledge that the current state of Aboriginal health in Canada is a direct result of previous Canadian government policies, including residential schools. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 322)

Clearly, while the healing movement and return to culture has been underway, the calls for action are a call for responsibility, accountability, support and honor of the prior agreements made with First Nations people.

Therapeutic approaches to working with Indigenous populations include substance abuse

treatment, trauma-informed counseling, and attention and energy to suicide intervention and prevention strategies (Gone, 2010). Some of the more mainstream approaches to these challenges may however have limitations when working with Indigenous populations (Gone, 2010; Grayshield et al., 2015; Hall, Dell, Fornssler, Hopkins, & Mushquash, 2015; Hodge et al., 2009; Warner, 2003). Mainstream approaches lack the opportunity for clients to gain a greater understanding of each way of being which is integral in traditional teachings (Rowan et al., 2015). Therapeutic approaches that incorporate cultural values in working with people, that may be masking trauma, can aid in more positive outcomes (Gundy, 2011). In addition, helping clients to understand the historical impact that created multigenerational trauma can help increase effectiveness of therapy (Warner, 2003) and increase rapport with marginalized clients (Gone, 2010).

Notwithstanding the attempts to exterminate and assimilate the Indigenous peoples from this land, the culture is again being taught, and healing is happening (Hill, 2008; [www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca), 2015). Researchers remind us that while there are intergenerational impacts, there are also intergenerational resilience factors as well as cultural practices and structures that can and have contributed to survival, coping and well-being (Goodluck & White Hat, 2011; Hall et al., 2015; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). More Aboriginal people are returning to their culture for healing and to enhance their well-being (Hill, 2008). Addictions treatment centers in Canada had begun using both Indigenous culture and mainstream approaches for program delivery (Dell & Hopkins, 2011). There are 65 First Nations treatment centers across the provinces of Canada that help those seeking addictions treatment, the majority of which incorporate cultural approaches in their programming (Government of Canada, n.d.).



### **History of Positive Psychology**

Well-being is comprised of many elements; from psychological and emotional health, physical wellness and growth, relationships to environment, overall health, and family. Positive psychology is the scientific study of well-being and thriving including areas like positive emotion, relationships, resilience, optimism, flow, flourishing, building on character strengths, as well as developing positive groups and institutions (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011), and community and interpersonal well-being (Prilleltensky et al., 2015).

Dr. Martin Seligman, in his presidential address in 1998 to the American Psychological Association, recommended that practitioners begin to study the positive aspects of well-being, noting that well-being is not equal to the absence of negative psychological symptoms but rather the existence of qualities and experiences such as positive emotions, meaning, engagement, and relationships (Fowler, Seligman, & Koocher, 1999). While therapeutic and clinical approaches continue to be helpful for treatment of negative emotions and affect, mental illness and psychological disorders, positive psychology can help foster or build well-being. With approximately 18% of people meeting the definition of flourishing, positive psychology continues to work towards helping people along an upward path towards greater well-being (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011). Researchers and practitioners have also been encouraged to examine and explore the many aspects of well-being that can help build strengths and well-being in individuals (Rebele, 2015).

Psychology has primarily been the study of what is wrong in one's life, abnormal behavior, mental illness and the alleviation of symptoms related to diagnoses listed in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM) of the American Psychiatric Association (Seligman, 2006). With the birth of positive psychology, research has become more available to supports the many

ways to increase resilience, develop more meaning in life, re-craft one's life and work, increase life satisfaction, expand on optimism, and strengthen positive relationships. In addition to the individual aspects of well-being, positive psychology looks at how one can contribute to others and the world (Diener, 2009).

### **Theories of Well-Being in Positive Psychology**

Some of this scientific evidence is complementary to Indigenous models of well-being that have endured for centuries. As more Indigenous research is facilitated and more on the aspects of well-being are explicated, the science can support effectiveness of specific cultural approaches to aid in well-being of First Nations and other Indigenous peoples. Cultural methods of science can also inform positive psychology.

### **PERMA Model of Well-Being**

Seligman (2011) put forth the PERMA model of well-being that consists of five pillars/domains: Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning, and Accomplishment. He states that well-being can be reached through any one of the pillars, and that one is not necessary or dependent on another. Additionally, flourishing includes not only well-being in one's own life but also contributing to flourishing in the lives of others (Seligman, 2011).

A life with positive relationships is a critical element of the PERMA model of well-being (Seligman, 2011). Nurturing relationships help with fostering belonging and positive relationships are correlated with living longer (Lyubomirsky, 2007). While there are plentiful ways to improve relationships, people's happiness also is impacted by the happiness of those around them (Fowler & Christakis, 2009). The Framingham heart study had shown that even residing within a certain distance of happy people can also have positive influences (Fowler & Christakis, 2009).

### **Character Strengths**

As a response to the DSM that focuses only on the diagnosis of mental illnesses, Peterson & Seligman, (2004) developed the Values in Action: Character Strengths inventory as a way to identify character strengths that when used in optimal proportions are correlated to flourishing, life satisfaction and less depression. The VIA character strengths classification was developed by gathering information from across cultures around the world, asking about virtues and strengths and categorizing the common traits that were identified. Peterson and Seligman included the ones that met the criteria of universality and service to others (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004).

Well-being is considered to be something that can be built, strengthened and expanded in one's life. Niemiec (2014) suggests a process to make practical use of character strengths which he calls Aware, Explore, Apply. By using this process, one can become more aware of one's strengths through taking the VIA survey and identifying the ratings of strengths. Next, the explore phase would entail more about one's signature (top) strengths by thinking about the impacts of the strengths on one's personal life and the lives of others. For example, the expansion of character strengths involves applying strengths in a new way, using them more often, using them to obtain one's goals. Use of character strengths can enhance well-being for populations already high in well-being and for those who may be experiencing challenges with well-being (Niemiec, 2014).

### **Resilience**

Other theories of well-being include elements of resilience, self-esteem, purpose in life, autonomy, and personal growth. Positive psychology also provides tools to enhance resilience, increase optimism, and foster self-efficacy that guide people to their own uniqueness, often

resulting in further engagement with their own well-being (Reivich & Shatte, 2002; Seligman, 2006). Enhancing resilience, challenging unhelpful thinking patterns, and using active constructive responding are helpful tools to enhancing well-being. Resilient people have the following protective factors which help protect them from PTSD: they are task oriented, have belief in their abilities to control outcomes, and they use their supports to deal with the adversity (Reivich & Shatte, 2002). Educating on skills to increase resilience is another area that can be used to encourage optimism and hope in communities. The more one can dispute or challenge thoughts that are not helpful to a person's well-being, the more one can overcome adversities and build on strengths (Reivich & Shatte, 2002). The ABC (adverse event, belief, and consequence) model, a cognitive process, is used to help get the outcomes desired, to increase helpful emotions, improve physiology, and change thoughts, so that they are more as more helpful to one's well-being. The ABC model can be used retrospectively (looking back) or prospectively (looking forward) (Reivich & Shatte, 2002).

### **Self-Determination Theory**

Autonomy has been considered in its role with positive interventions. In self-determination theory, Brown & Ryan (2015) discuss the practice of mindfulness regulation to develop habits, which when continued, can develop further into traits of behavior or social interactions. They state that engaging in mindfulness practices can bring to awareness the factors affecting motivation of the actions or behaviors, and can ultimately serve as a method to regain or strengthen autonomy. Further, those who act independently engage more in adaptive behavior geared toward health and well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2015).

### **Self-Efficacy Theory**

Self-efficacy is defined as a sense of control in one's abilities, or the confidence one has in

their abilities (Maddux, 2009). Self-efficacy is a combination of one's beliefs about how one performs a task, the observations from the response of others, the judgment from one's own perspective, and from feedback or messages from others on how the task was performed (Maddux, 2009). To improve well-being, perseverance and self-efficacy is used through setting and eventually attaining desired outcomes and goals (Maddux, 2009). This is important in health and well-being because one feels more in charge of one's behavior, ways to improve, when strategies for health and well-being are implemented and practiced (Maddux, 2009). Receiving satisfactory results, positive feedback and desired consequences, also helps increase one's sense of control and strengthens beliefs in one's abilities (Maddux, 2009).

### **Hope Theory**

In hope theory, hope is the perception of one's ability to discover possibilities of goals, reflect on past successes, and to decide on ways to attain the goals (Magyar-Moe & Lopez, 2015; Rand & Cheavens, 2009). When one sets out to establish a goal, those with high hope set more difficult goals than the goals already realized (Magyar-Moe & Lopez, 2015). There are benefits as well in goal setting when surrounded by others who have similar goals and those who are hopeful (Magyar-Moe & Lopez, 2015).

There are many ways to be well and many interactions between psychological and physical well-being. Still other perspectives include spiritual and environmental well-being within the context of overall health (Peterson, 2006).

### **Indigenous Wellness Framework and Outcomes**

Research on well-being from an Indigenous perspective is growing and frameworks to documents these perspectives are being developed and documented in mainstream research. Kotalik & Martin (2016) remind us of the teachings by Benton-Banai, that the goal of living a

good life from an Aboriginal perspective is to live in harmony with Creation. Elder Gladys Wapass-Greyeyes provides the reminder that group health and wellness is interdependent on wellness of environment and all of creation (Hall et al., 2015). The connection to the land is also an important aspect to consider for restoring balance (Duran, 2006).

While it is understood that Indigenous people have their own methods of scientific analysis (Hall et al., 2015), there are a variety of training programs, educational programs, and studies emerging in mainstream social sciences that document the validity that culture as healing will help address the historical impacts on Indigenous people. Educating Native people on the history of Native Americans people and journey of their ancestors is a critical part to knowing one's self (Goodluck & White Hat, 2011). One example of programming that teaches culture and history in Native communities to combat the impacts of history is the peer support training offered by White Bison, a non-profit organization that is operated by a Native American group. White Bison is based out of Colorado Springs, Colorado and provides culturally-based awareness and education in recovery, addictions treatment, wellness, and programs to build healthy families. The delivery of community-based cultural programs of White Bison has become known as the 'wellbriety movement' (wellbriety meaning sober and well) (Coyhis & Simonelli, 2008). White Bison has been developing community training programs to address substance abuse in Native communities since 1988, and is an example of community programming geared toward healing and well-being (Coyhis & Simonelli, 2008; Gundy, 2011). Programming under White Bison has also been shown to affect civic leadership (Moore & Coyhis, 2010).

Similarly, Indigenous healing and wellness programs such as the Fours Worlds Development Project have been developing in Canada since the 1980's, and have created

programming based on the medicine wheel's holistic model (Hill, 2008). With the establishment of the National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP) in the 1970's in Canada, residential treatment centers for alcohol and drugs were funded by the federal government with the goal of reducing alcohol and drug abuse in Aboriginal communities (Government of Canada, 2015). Many of these centers incorporated Indigenous ways of healing into the programming and now offer culturally-based services to help with addictions treatment.

While positive psychology is growing, it is evident that more can be explored about well-being from other cultures such as Indigenous cultures. Fundamental across many Indigenous peoples are the concepts of respect, belonging, and balance in maintaining well-being. Or, to be well, one must recognize one's own value in family, environment and community, and strive to respect and balance the interconnectedness of these relationships (Bear, 2014). For centuries, Native Americans have shared cultural teachings regarding balance, healing and holistic well-being using the Medicine Wheel as well as the circle concept (Coyhis & Simonelli, 2008; Warner, 2003). Others include, The Good Mind, which brings about awareness of having to work continuously on thoughts and emotions to live with kindness and compassion (Coyhis & Simonelli, 2008).

A scoping study using the Two-Eyed Seeing approach (synthesis of Indigenous and Western science perspectives) was conducted with a number of Indigenous people working at addictions treatment centers across Canada to help inform the creation of new tools to assess the effectiveness of cultural intervention in addictions programming (Hall et al., 2015; Rowan et al., 2015). The multidisciplinary team committed itself to the process of developing research principles from two differing perspectives, and using ceremonies to create a space for shared knowledge for both mainstream and Indigenous perspectives. The team used both perspectives to

chart the data collected (Rowan et al., 2015). From this, the Indigenous Wellness Framework was documented and the Native Wellness Assessment (NWA) tool was developed. The Indigenous Wellness Framework identifies indicators of well-being as hope, meaning, purpose, and belonging, and the development of the Native Wellness Assessment (NWA) tool measures these indicators from participation in cultural activities (Refer to Figure 2). Spiritual wellness indicators in the Native Wellness Assessment (NWA) look at beliefs, identity, and values. Also in the NWA, indicators of belonging look at attitude, community, family and relationships; measures of meaning at intuition, rationale, understanding, and measures of purpose as way of life, way of doing, and wholeness (Fiedeldey-Van Dijk et al., 2016; Hall et al., 2015). Following this, consultation with other stakeholders was important and the NWA was tested with several other treatment centers across Canada (Rowan et al., 2015). This process was also shown to be effective at fusing culturally appropriate methods of data collections as well as mainstream scientific study (Rowan et al., 2015). Similarly, in positive psychology, a sense of spiritual connectedness is correlated with well-being, beliefs and practices, and is important when dealing with challenges (Pargament, 2002). It is interesting to note similarities between the measurements of hope, meaning, purpose, and belonging with constructs in well-being theories in the positive psychology.

Prior to the development of the NWA, and along with the movement to return to culture for healing and wellness, First Nations operating addictions treatment centers began to add to or replace the mainstream approaches to addiction treatment like cognitive behavioral therapy, group therapy and Alcoholics Anonymous, with more cultural teachings and activities. A cultural approach is intended to address the imbalance in the client's life rather than focusing on one specific problem area (Hodge et al., 2009). The strong belief is that getting the client to



return to a spiritual purpose of life will help guide his or her life and addictions issues will become less problematic (Hodge et al., 2009). Cultural practices differ from community to community or from person to person and vary across First Nations and tribes, although there may be commonalities, such as cleansing ceremonies and sharing circles (Dell et al., 2015). The Native Wellness Assessment measures pre and post indicators to wellness as a result of participation in cultural activity, and not the activity itself. For clients attending an alcohol and/or drug treatment program that has incorporated cultural activities, teachings, and ceremony, the Native Wellness Assessment is now one way that is available to measure a client's sense of hope, meaning, purpose, and belonging (Rowan et al., 2015). Use of the NWA will add more to the evidence base about the effectiveness of cultural practices in well-being and addictions recovery (Rowan et al., 2014).

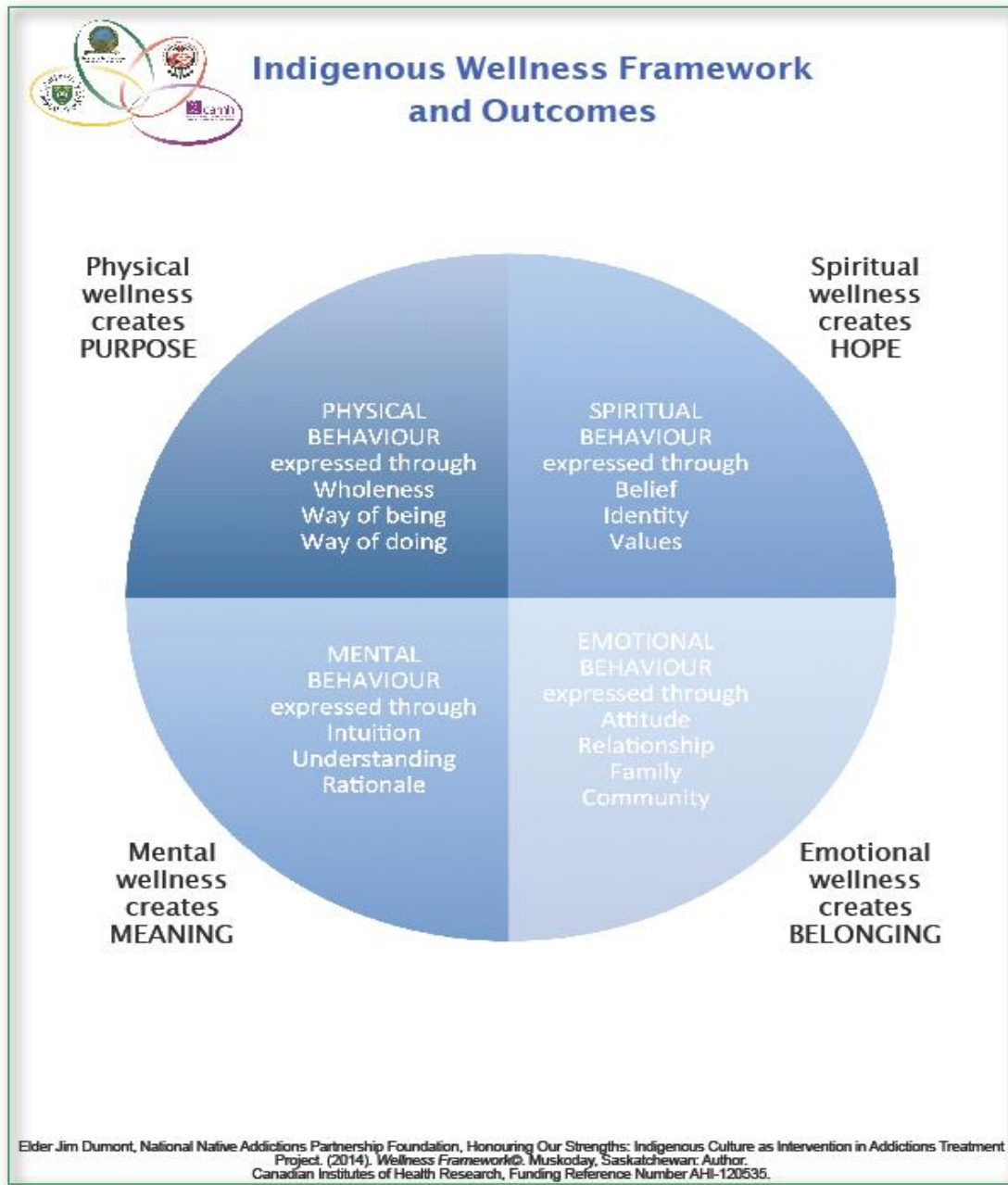


Figure 2. Indigenous Wellness Framework

**Ngwaagan Gamig Recovery Centre Inc. Addictions Treatment Program**

Ngwaagan Gamig Recovery Centre Inc. (Rainbow Lodge) has been operating for over 40 years in Wikwemikong, the unceded reserve on Manitoulin Island in northern Ontario, Canada.

The organization now delivers culturally-based residential treatment and community-based

programming for alcohol and drug addictions. In 2012, the organization redesigned the entire treatment program. An opportunity arose to respond to the feedback and recommendations from clients who consistently stated that more cultural teachings and activities were needed and desired. The decision was made to change the foundation of the program from the more mainstream Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) model toward one that is grounded in the culture and based on the Seven Grandfather teachings. In addition, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) approaches were included. Rather than focusing on educating and guiding clients through the first 5 steps of the AA model, for example, the program now is geared toward changing thought patterns to be more positive and teaching and reinforcing aspects of the Seven Grandfather teachings and the Medicine Wheel. Helping clients reconnect to their cultural identity and giving them a sense of knowing and belonging can help them make better health choices. When one begins to deal with the historical issues one can begin a new story (Duran, 2006).

To prepare for the transition, the treatment team engaged in cultural enhancement training from knowledge keepers in the community and in training on CBT to receive certification in this approach. Training sessions occurred periodically over the course of eighteen months and for each session, the team noted which sessions or activities or teachings would be most helpful for the clientele served. Following the training, the team set out to redesign the program to emphasize strengths in culture while learning ways to address ineffective thinking patterns and build support networks for recovery. The redesigned program focuses more on the cultural teachings, encourages balance of the four aspects of being represented in the Medicine Wheel (mental, emotional, physical, spiritual) and reinforces teachings of the Seven Grandfathers values (Love, Bravery, Humility, Honesty, Respect, Wisdom, Truth). The program was pilot tested and modified until the sequence of the sessions

seemed to build on one another smoothly and supported clients learning through the four weeks. Clients continuously share that the cultural activities that were included in the program such as the sharing circle ceremony, the teachings on the Medicine Wheel and the Seven Grandfathers are most helpful.

The intent of the redesign of the addictions program at Ngwaagan Gamig Recovery Centre Inc. was to respond more effectively to the clients being served and to the recommendations received by past clients. This aligned with the strong beliefs in the messages that culture is key in living a good life, based on the frameworks being developed across Canada by Indigenous people to redesign addictions services. Some of the constructs in positive psychology complement the work being done at Ngwaagan Gamig Recovery Centre and can further add to the addictions program which guides clients toward well-being and wholeness. For example mindfulness complements circle sharing, and self-efficacy can be matched to learning and practicing skills in cognitive-behavioral therapy.

Within the framework of a culturally-based model for addictions treatment that is delivered at Ngwaagan Gamig Recovery Centre Inc., cultural teachings of Respect, Humility, Truth, Honesty, Bravery, Wisdom, and Love, also known as the Seven Grandfather Teachings, are shared. The values are reinforced when opportunities arise to acknowledge positive attitudes, individual insight, and changes in behavior. Cultural approaches facilitate ways to rebalance the whole, the body, mind, spirit, and emotion (Hodge et al., 2009).

### **Positive Psychology Overlaps with Cultural Teachings**

In addition to the cultural interventions, mainstream approaches to addictions treatment, and the synthesis of both, there is also overlap of positive psychology constructs with the cultural concepts of quality of life (Dell & Hopkins, 2011). The overlap between positive psychology

and Anishinaabe cultural teachings will be described further in context with the Ngwaagan Gamig Recovery Centre Inc. addictions treatment program. This program has activities, group sessions, and individual counseling which clients report as being effective in helping them with understanding addictions, their own history, recognizing strengths, increasing skills and abilities, and in helping to achieve goals in a supportive and culturally safe manner.

Clients participate in sharing circles each morning which start with a cultural cleansing ritual. During the sharing circle, clients are permitted the uninterrupted time necessary to share what is on their minds and in their hearts. They learn teachings about the circle, inclusiveness, and equality. As the days progress during the delivery of the structured program, the circle sharing becomes more in depth and greater insight is shared. Group processes can be very effective for gaining different perspectives and for encouraging possibilities of hope (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2010). Guidelines of post-traumatic growth in positive psychology recommend that clinicians help clients with trauma active active-listening, quiet presence, and non-prescriptive responses rather than to advise, display emotional reaction to disclosures, or to provide solutions (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2010). Similarly, the protocol of the circle includes passing along one by one, a sacred item or object that indicates whose time it is to speak. During this time, there is no interruption from others. Circle sharing through ceremony supports connecting to spirituality, a time for prayer, and/or meditation.

Two of the Seven Grandfather teachings are shared each week, starting with Respect and Humility. This session includes sample definitions of these values, examples of what respect and humility might look like and how the opposite of each would create imbalance in one's Medicine Wheel. Learning about compassion for self and others requires looking at one's own behaviors and actions and learning how to forgive oneself (Armstrong, 2011). Cultural teachings and an

orientation session early in the program consisting of house policies and expectations on active participation help set the groundwork for the rest of the program.

Also during the first week, clients set goals. Setting goals is another activity where positive psychology complements the addictions treatment program. The short-term goals are for the four-week program and the longer-term goals are a part of aftercare planning or what is called the Way of Life plan. Achieving the short-term goals helps with skill development and confidence in achieving the goals. Striving toward balance is a process of following the medicine wheel continuously (Thomason, 2013). It is important to develop goals within the context of one's culture to help with not only making the goals more attainable, but helping to increase hope (Magyar-Moe & Lopez, 2015). Using the medicine wheel approach, clients will incorporate goals within the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual sides of self and will help with planning toward wholeness and balance.

The clients are introduced to cultural ceremonies that are held weekly that are holistic in nature. In addition, cultural teachings include the Creation Story, roles of men and women, and medicine wheel teachings. For healing to take place, one must know where one comes from and learn about the strengths of cultural ways (Coyhis & Simonelli, 2008). From an Indigenous cultural perspective, spirituality and relationships are key, gifts are provided by the Creator to discover meaning, roles, responsibility, and connections to the land and all of creation (Coyhis & Simonelli, 2008; Dell & Hopkins, 2011). As the program and self-exploration continues through teachings, ceremonies, activities, and awareness, clients may begin to explore meaning and purpose which are also elements of the PERMA model of well-being (Seligman, 2011). Like the teachings of interconnectedness, in positive psychology, spirituality is integrated with the larger community (Pargament & Mahoney, 2009) and meaning is connected to the idea that one's

purpose serves greater good (Seligman, 2011).

The first week of the residential addictions treatment program at Ngwaagan Gamig Recovery Centre Inc. ends with each client making a medicine wheel, as taught by knowledge-keepers Annie Nabigon and Perry Shabogestic previously of the Raising the Spirit Mental Wellness Team at M'Chigeeng, Ontario. This activity is used as a self-assessment tool throughout the program. The Medicine Wheel helps mirror back a reflection of their current state of wholeness or lack thereof and by the end of the fourth week of the program, the clients have made progress on their goals, and frequently tell a different story. In positive psychology, storytelling is one way that is used to help individuals put emotional events into a context that can promote improved mental health and that can help construct meaning from the event that helps with an increased sense of control (Niederhoffer & Pennebaker, 2009). Additionally, disclosing about events that are traumatic impacts the health of individuals and it can be helpful to share these stories with others who have similar experiences (Lyubomirsky, 2007). This also increases opportunities to construct the meaning from the story within a supportive environment (Lyubomirsky, 2007; Niederhoffer & Pennebaker, 2009). The story from the beginning of the program and the end of the program is changed, reflecting growth in understanding and often meaning. Although clients enter the program identifying a drug and/or alcohol problem, they disclose underlying contributing factors from their past that often are trauma-related. As they move through the program, clients are able to share, feel accepted, and move toward planning for the future. Again, this process is complementary to that of post-traumatic growth as described by Calhoun and Tedeschi (2010).

During the second week of the program, the morning sharing circle continues to start each day. Clients usually become more accustomed to the routine and begin initiating the circle

themselves opening the circle with the ceremonial smudge and prayers. Clients become more comfortable as these skills are practiced. In positive psychology, the belief in what one can do and taking initiative in changing one's life are part of increasing self-efficacy (Maddux, 2009). The treatment program sessions include Seven Grandfather teachings on Truth and Honesty and more cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) approaches on examining thought patterns and practicing ways to change thought patterns to ones that are more helpful. Clients learn about personal wellness, self-esteem, multi-generational impacts such as that of residential schools, and patterns of addictions cycles. Following the session on multi-generational impacts, many clients learn for the first time, that historical events and oppressive policies may be connected to their own families of origin. Often, this marks a new opportunity for clients to reframe their perspectives and note that further exploration is needed in history of their families and communities. In positive psychology, this may be similar to putting things in perspective where more information is received to inform more accurate thinking, thus lessening negative emotions (Reivich & Shatte, 2002).

Other activities during the second week include cleansing ceremonies, art therapy, and attending a cultural support group. When clients create artwork or make medicine pouches, they often discover the benefits of self-reflection, mindfulness in creative activity, and often flow, as they work on their individual projects. Flow can be described as an optimal experience where one realizes one's abilities are growing (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). It is suggested that therapeutic groups that use art, music and spiritual practices strengthen identity within one's culture such as art, music, and spiritual practices (Warner, 2003). Pember (2016) suggests that therapeutic treatment for Indigenous clients include some aspects of rituals, language, on-the-land activity, stories, songs, and education in history. de Botton & Armstrong (2013) have provided possible



ways that art can be viewed to help with enhancing well-being. In becoming better versions of ourselves, art can serve as a reminder of certain times in life, special moments that were positive or meaningful. Art can induce hope, help address sorrow, and aid in rebalancing emotions (de Botton & Armstrong, 2013).

The celebration activities at the end of the second week include receiving a gift, acknowledging completion of the second week. This is a time for clients to begin sharing in a more social setting the highlights of the week and insights about another week of working toward their goals. This activity is comparable to the What Went Well positive psychology intervention which facilitates focus on positive emotion, savoring. When practiced regularly, this activity increases happiness and reduces depression (Seligman, 2011). Social support is another aspect of relationships within which one can develop strategies for coping, foster belonging, and sharing of issues to gain support (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

The Seven Grandfather Teachings of bravery and wisdom are taught along with sessions geared toward using one's voice, wellness planning, meditation and mindfulness, communication, and crafts. More cultural teachings such as men's and women's roles and history on the migration of the Anishinaabe people to this territory are a part of the third week of the program. Following the session on using one's voice, each client is asked to write a positive letter to another client. This letter is shared with the other client as part of the week's end celebration. In positive psychology, the positive letter may be considered an adaptation of the strengths-spotting (Niemiec, 2014; Seligman, 2011) and the gratitude letter which benefits both the giver and the receiver of the letter (Seligman, 2011).

The fourth week of the program continues with Grandfather Teachings of Love and then the Journey Within (integration all Seven Grandfather Teachings into one's life). Sessions in the

treatment program that are based on CBT approaches include identifying thoughts and feelings and unhelpful thinking patterns. This too, overlaps with positive psychology approaches for increasing resilience and optimism. Techniques to address thinking traps including reframing thoughts are part of increasing resilience (Reivich & Shatte, 2002). As part of the treatment program, clients will practice changing thoughts from unhelpful to helpful or more effective thought patterns. This CBT approach is also supported by positive psychology research and is used to help move toward positive emotions, achievement, or inspiration, through increasing optimism (Seligman, 2006). As clients learn about unhelpful thinking patterns like self-blame, they engage in activities and prepare worksheets on practicing more helpful thinking patterns or better accuracy in thought patterns. As they continue to practice, they begin helping one another with changing negative statements to positive or more accurate statements. In positive psychology, this is referred to as disputing thoughts and is connected to increasing optimism (Seligman, 2007). How one explains adverse events to him or herself is part of the optimistic or pessimistic explanatory styles that can be explored and altered to help change ones' life for the better (Seligman, 2006).

The sharing circles daily and celebration at the end of each week continue. During the last week of the program, there is a session on forgiveness. A ceremony for letting go of anything further that the client wishes to no longer carry is also facilitated. Other sessions include developing skills and practices that can help build relationships when they return to their communities. The Ways of Life (aftercare) plans are finalized and include developing strategies to continuously work on wholeness, including what one will do to function well mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually, as well as identifying supports, and longer-term goals. In positive psychology, identifying a sense of purpose is connected to life satisfaction (Cotton

Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talib, & Finch, 2009). Clients will write out prayers or poems for themselves which usually speak to their insight, gratitude, and intentions for the future. This activity helps the individual connect to their spirituality, express gratitude, and identify roles in their lives. Purpose enhances pro social action, community engagement, and is associated with resilience (Cotton Bronk et al., 2009). A feast and ceremony end the program along with gift giving, presenting clients with their completion certificates, and time for prayer, acknowledgements, song, and honoring, again time for positive emotion, connection, and meaning.

A Native perspective looks at wellness as the balance of the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects of ourselves (Bear, 2014; Dapice, 2006; Grayshield et al., 2015; Hodge et al., 2009; Warner 2003). The Seven Grandfather Teachings of the Anishinaabek are foundational to integrate into living a good life (Benton-Banai, 1988). Spirituality and connectedness to environment is key (Garrett et al., 2016). Like the teachings of the Anishinaabek, some theories of well-being include spirituality. Systems that support greater wholeness can be life-sustaining, and purposeful (Pargament, Wong, & Exline, 2016). The integration of the whole is key in strengthening ones' beliefs, values, and practice and expands one's abilities to address complexities in life (Pargament et al., 2016). According to Pargament & Mahoney (2009), "spirituality is a process that seeks to discover the sacred" (p. 612). The helping field can benefit from incorporating more spiritual realms into helping programs (Pargament et al., 2016). Spirituality is one of the twenty-four character strengths in the VIA classification of strengths. Learning about the values with which to live by also connects to the characters strengths and virtues put forth by Peterson & Seligman (2004). Character strengths help build resilience and help with dealing with adversities (Grenville-Cleave, 2012; Niemiec,

2014).

Using a cultural approach of facilitating ways to rebalance the whole can guide more clarity and help reduce issues related to addictions (Hodge et al., 2009). With a history of internalized oppression, many clients seeking help with addictions are also seeking a reconnection to their identity as Indigenous persons (Duran, 2006). Garret et al, (2016) recommend that for counseling, guiding clients to making choices that lead to harmony and balance, and that help them understand more about their purpose and strengths will help build hope.

Based on evaluations from clients who complete the program, they leave having experienced more positive emotion. They experience a period of time with healthy new relationships, a sense of achievement, and greater hope for the future. Increased self-efficacy and the belief that they can make a difference in their lives and that of their family is now at the forefront of their minds. They are more optimistic about the future, have a greater understanding of the cycle of addictions, and increased insight into the underlying issues of trauma that may be contributing to their imbalance. These are teachings that can help them remain on a path of wellness in the future. They will have practiced goal setting, and reframing unhelpful thought patterns. In general, the clients completing the program have a more balanced life, tools to help with future challenges, a plan for well-being, and a much stronger sense of spiritual connection, identity, purpose, meaning in their life, and belonging.

Clients engage in regular opportunities for increasing positive emotions during the treatment program. Social relationships help nurture belonging, expressing positive comments for others can bring about good feelings for both the giver and the receiver, and honest communication fosters support and understanding (Lyubomirsky, 2007). As clients use the

medicine wheel as a tool for self-assessment, they begin to tell a story of knowing who they are and where they are going. Discovering meaning in one's life and purpose for the larger collective helps motivate oneself as well as helps with addressing future adversities (Cotton Bronk et al., 2009). With more balance and use of the Seven Grandfather teachings, clients may be experiencing more of Seligman's (2011) PERMA model of well-being: positive emotions, planning for greater engagement when they return to their home community, improvements in relationships, clarity in meaning through creating their Way of Life (aftercare) plan, pride in accomplishing the completion of the program. Positive psychology concepts, theories, principles and approaches can help explain the increased well-being from participants of the treatment program at Ngwaagan Gamig Recovery Centre Inc.

### **Recommended Use of Positive Psychology in NGRC's Addictions Treatment Program**

Teachings about well-being and living a good life have been shared for generations. Studies in positive psychology offer some areas of plausible explanations for the power of these approaches that aid in seeking balance of the whole being and relationships to the environment. It is important that the interventions are culturally-relevant to the environment and to the people served. Dell and Hopkins (2011) emphasize that culturally safe interventions be focused on strengthening connection and identity. Consideration of one's culture and worldview when suggesting implementing positive interventions is also important (Schueller, 2014; Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). Personalizing positive interventions with motivation based on the individual's interests and goals, ethnicity and/or use of cultural interventions, can lengthen the duration of the effects (Schueller, 2014). Looking at intrinsic goals, individual interests, activities that encourage flow, one's strengths would help determine a better fit for positive

interventions (Schueller, 2014).

From an Indigenous perspective, living well is living through balance with the spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical aspects of oneself as shown in the Indigenous Wellness Framework (IWF) (Refer to Figure 2). From the IWF model, an intervention in one area will impact the other areas. Some of the interventions include engaging in physical activity and meditation. While not exhaustive, outcome measures have included frequency of behavioral and cognitive change, meeting target goals, questionnaires on positive emotion and life satisfaction. The IWF has similar aspects of Seligman's (2011) PERMA model of well-being, such as meaning, relationships, and perhaps engagement as ways of being and doing. It is interesting to note that Seligman discussed his thoughts that what weaves it all together is hope (M. Seligman, personal communication, December 11, 2016). The Indigenous wellness framework identifies that spiritual behaviors are expressed in beliefs, values, and identity which create hope. Some of the activities in the treatment program at Ngwaagan Gamig Recovery Centre Inc. certainly facilitate positive emotion, further engagement, strengthen relationships, enhances meaning, and acknowledges accomplishment, which are elements of the PERMA model of well-being.

To further strengthen the program, additional adaptations are suggested. Positive psychology can add a framework and methodology that serve as stepping stones to the Anishinaabe cultural approaches for strengths-based interventions. Positive psychology interventions like activities that are focused on building strengths have been shown to increase well-being (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). The Seven Grandfather teachings identify the importance of incorporating Wisdom, Bravery, Truth, Love, Honesty, and Humility into one's life (Benton-Banai, 1988; Wesley-Esquimaux & Snowball, 2010). The team at Ngwaagan Gamig Recovery Centre Inc. can learn more about the VIA character strengths and utilize this

resource to help clients with recognizing strengths and become more familiar with how to develop them for optimal use to increase well-being. The strengths profile and additional resources are available online so that clients can continue to access these resources to help with ongoing practical applications after the treatment program. Positive interventions such as identifying strengths in one-self and others, strengths spotting, and using your strengths in different ways each day, provide scientifically tested methods and specific activities that can be used to augment the cultural teachings. For example, learning about one's strengths, can help a client identify signature strengths. In turn, finding ways to use strengths in a new way each week can be added to the goals of the clients in the treatment program. The clients can practice identifying their strengths and continue to use this strategy as part of their Way of Life (aftercare) plan. The program facilitators can incorporate a specific activity of using one of the Seven Grandfather Teachings each day in a new way. An opportunity to discuss the outcome of that can be a part the sharing circle the next morning. This type of positive psychology intervention can help the individual and others learn more and practice using strengths each day thereby creating opportunity for change (Garrett et al., 2016).

Activities that are shown to be effective in supporting sharing, acceptance, harmony, and balance, that serve others and that support positive relationships are important elements of this program as cultural identity is engrained in community membership (Garrett, et al., 2016). Lyubomirsky (2007) suggests setting a meditation environment free from distractions and conducive to the process of turning inward. Generations acknowledged cultural practices of healing toward balance and harmony (Garret et al., 2016). The circle sharing conducted is an effective approach to facilitate this. Additionally, incorporating regular mindfulness meditation practices can aid in reducing stress, increased attention (Baime, 2011), regulating emotions and

changing self-perception (Holzel et al., 2011) enhance individual strengths (Shapiro, 2009) and overall well-being (Ricard, Lutz, & Davidson, 2014; Niemiec, 2014). Further, engaging in mindfulness practices can bring to awareness the factors affecting motivation of the actions or behaviors, and can ultimately serve as a method to regain or strengthen autonomy (Brown & Ryan, 2015) and can motivate persons to use their strengths more (Niemiec, 2014). The program can incorporate this practice of mindfulness each day as part of the sharing circle activity and process.

Goal setting is another aspect that can be shared with clients as they develop their short-term goal and Way of Life (aftercare) plans. In positive psychology, conscious goal setting includes setting targets that are specific, important to the individual, and attainable (Locke, 1996). This method of setting goals can contribute to increased self-efficacy, self-regulation, self-satisfaction (Locke, 1996) and can enhance the process of facilitating the Way of Life (aftercare) plans with clients.

There are other disciplines like the arts and history that also contribute to well-being and which are an integral part of cultural teachings. Pawelski (2016) posits that comprehensive approaches amongst the humanities and psychology will provide greater understanding about well-being and flourishing. Art can be used to become better versions of ourselves or to remember certain times in life that were positive or meaningful, for example (de Botton & Armstrong (2013). Art can serve as reminders of special moments, can induce hope, can help us address sorrow, and can aid in rebalancing ourselves and our emotions (de Botton & Armstrong (2013). A craft session where participants make a medicine pouch is a specific activity in the addictions treatment program at Ngwaagan Gamig Recovery Centre Inc. Clients often create the pouches with personal meaning and take pride in the outcome. Adding an opportunity to process



the meaning or impact of this session can include opportunities to savor, which enhances appreciation and positive emotions (Jacobs Bao & Lyubomirsky, 2014).

More education on the history of First Nations people is definitely needed across Canada. The addictions treatment program can add more of an overview of this history in the session on multigenerational impacts of residential schools and the cultural teachings on history and migration of the Anishinaabek. Understanding more about the history and about the viewpoints of respect for the wampum belts and original treaties can help with reframing perspectives. Appreciation of the struggles that ancestors have endured, the resilience and strength that it has taken to ensure survival may add to more understanding of belonging. In positive psychology strengths-based education priorities include educating on individual strengths in oneself and others as well as group strengths (Linkins, Niemiec, Gillham, & Mayerson, 2015)

The physical aspect of well-being is another area that can be introduced as a positive intervention in the addictions treatment program at Ngwaagan Gamig Recovery Centre Inc. Well-being can be enhanced with interventions through effective physical activity and cognitive processes (Ratey & Hagerman, 2008). The neurological reward system can relearn ways to achieve rewards from addiction to rewards of health and well-being (Ratey & Hagerman, 2008; Ratey & Loehr, 2011). The benefits of physical activity are many; from increased positive emotions, reducing risk of cardiovascular disease, reducing stress, to preventative measures for mental illness (Faulkner, Hefferon, & Mutrie, 2015). The body influences the mind, can lessen stress and worry, and increase positive emotions particularly if the activity is performed with others in social contexts (Lyubomirsky, 2007). The body mind perspective is a connected one, and Shusterman (2006) describes the individual self as whole, not only possessing a physical body, but being the body. Physical activity impacts the other aspects of self; the mind, spirit,

emotion, but it's interconnectedness of the whole that also impacts the body (Shusterman, 2006). This is analogous to the medicine wheel approach that one action in one quadrant of the whole affects the other quadrants. An increase in physical activity in the treatment program can have numerous beneficial effects on emotional, mental, spiritual and the whole of well-being.

Good communication and expressing gratitude can strengthen and build positive relationships. Helping others establish the practice of savoring and counting blessings can help with the effects of responses to negative events (Lyubomirsky, 2007; Seligman, 2011; Smith, Harrison, Kurtz, & Bryant, 2014). When establishing connections with others, hopeful thinking is also an important aspect (Rand & Cheavens, 2009). Responding with genuine interest, support, and enthusiasm to another person sharing good news, (also called Active Constructive Responding) is another way to strengthen positive relationships and increases positive affect for both persons (Gable, Gonzaga, & Strachman, 2006). Further, life satisfaction and well-being in relationships is increased when individuals feel valued (Gable et al., 2006). Relationships built on trust and familiarity will help strengthen the relationship and even correlate with longevity (Haidt, 2006). Sharing information about these techniques and approaches can help build positive and meaningful relationships.

The NWA assesses outcomes of hope, meaning, purpose, and belonging from participation in cultural activities. Positive psychology can add resources to the treatment program by adding measurements that assess strengths, explanatory styles, life satisfaction, as well as interventions shown to improve well-being. Educating and teaching how to enhance resiliency, reframing thought patterns, and the ABCDE model (adverse event, behavior, consequences, disputation, energize) (Lyubomirsky, 2007; Reivich & Shatte, 2002), can bring additional ways to cognitive behavioral approaches already used in the program. The ability to

overcome challenges may be identified as resiliency (Reivich & Shatte, 2002). As challenges or adversities arise and one is able to work through the issue, resilience continually progresses and provides protective factors to guard against negative outcomes of future challenges (Masten, Cutuli, Herbers, & Reed, 2009). In Indigenous terms, the spirit is at the core of the individual and is the motivator to bounce back (Dell & Hopkins, 2011). Added to this could be the positive psychology approaches of increasing resilience, addressing thinking traps, reframing thoughts and disputation of thoughts (Reivich & Shatte, 2002), as well as recreating one's stories (Duran, 2006; Niederhoffer & Pennebaker, 2009), which will provide the possibility of working through the impacts of intergenerational trauma, while enhancing well-being.

There is overlap in positive psychology approaches and a number of activities that are already a part of this addictions treatment program. Implementing the suggested modifications and the practical applications can help enhance the program at Ngwaagan Gamig Recovery Centre Inc. Additionally, sleeping well, eating well, and increasing physical activity contribute to being at ones' best and can help strengthen relationships (Rath, 2015). Participating in an environment of structured activities that includes meals, exercise time, and sleep time, that also helps facilitate balance, well-being, meaning and purpose, along with connections to others can be a start for clients setting new habits toward a life of well-being. With the additional adaptations supported by research in increasing aspects of well-being, the addictions treatment program's effectiveness can be enhanced.

### **Conclusion**

As more Indigenous people and communities are returning to culture for healing from the impacts of history, more relevant therapeutic approaches to their unique experience and diversity is needed (Gone, 2010; Warner, 2003). Helping clients reconnect to cultural knowledge keepers

and practices may also be helpful (Gone, 2010; Hodge et al., 2009; Warner, 2003).

As positive psychology continues to grow and provides support for specific methods of enhancing aspects of well-being, it is important to remain open to how these methods can be adapted to other communities or cultures. The strengths-based approaches, interventions that assist with positive affect, and methods to enhance resilience and optimism are part of what positive psychology can add to working with Indigenous people (Garrett et al., 2016). The application and practice must be relevant to the recipients to enhance their well-being in ways that are meaningful to them (Dell, Hopkins, Menzies, Robinson, & Thompson, 2015; Schueller, 2014; Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). As additional tools and measurements are developed that are in line with Indigenous and other cultural worldviews, these too will add to the field of the study of well-being.

While working with a population that is facing challenges greater than addictions alone, cognitive behavioral therapy approaches and cultural teachings are certainly relevant. Healing ourselves will heal the past and the future (Duran et al., 1998). At a community level, community wellness is contingent on economic, health, equality, and occupational resources (Prilleltensky, 2011). A new story can be told (Duran, 1988). As in the Report from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the retold story can be the strengths of Indigenous people and the cultures that have endured for centuries (Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). Those who continue to work at their well-being can grow through trauma from survival, to recovery, to thriving in their lives (Lyubomirsky, 2007) and to flourishing, while raising the well-being of those around them (Seligman, 2011). Positive psychology continues to delve deeper into constructs that support well-being. This, in addition to cultural ways of being, wholeness, and connectedness can nurture well-being and flourishing for Indigenous people and

communities.

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