

MEDICINE OF METIS MUSIC
A Metis Cultural Song to AIDE Hepatitis C

Participant Manual

Shining Mountains Living Community Services

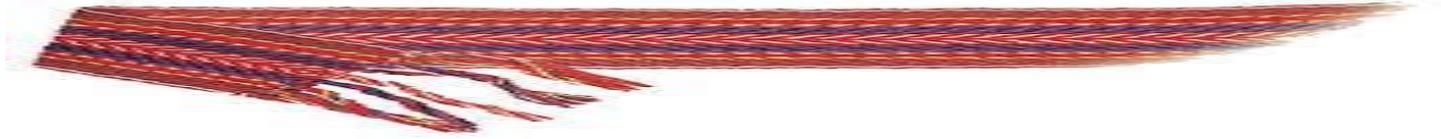
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Medicine of Metis Music

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Medicine:

Medicine is a very important word and concept for Aboriginal peoples. It means more than many might think of. It is not a word to be used lightly. It does not necessarily mean a “prescription”.

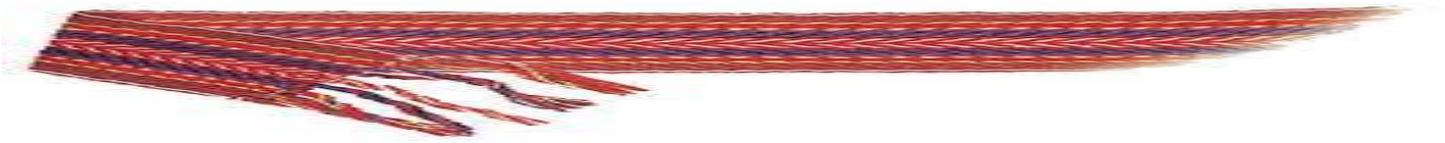
Words are considered to be powerful medicine, so is laughter, tears and love, even a person’s thoughts are seen to be medicine. Music, dance, art, prayers and songs are also powerful medicines.

This idea of medicine also includes the concept of teachings gained from looking at life events as The Circle of Life.

Meeting the Circle

The Circle is a teacher of life; it shows us a way of looking at ourselves, our reality, and our world. When we look at a Circle there is no beginning and no end, there is no place, person, or life form that is more important or less important than any other. Everything in life, whether plant life, animal life, water life or bird life is equally important and dependent and interconnected to each other. Through all the generations, those before now and those to come a thousand years from now we will remain connected. The Circle gives us the lessons regarding similarity such as that we are all born (come into this life) and we all die (leave this life) our time here may differ, it maybe seconds or many years, but the commonality remains. This teaching can bring us comfort and a sense of peace that we will always return to our original home when our job is completed. Turning this lesson around it also serves us to know that just as we are all similar we are also all different, in the same way that our similarities are vital so too are our differences. We may look different, find different things to enjoy learn different skills and have different experiences or views of life, but those very differences are precious and each difference we see in others reflects a new part of our selves.

The Circle can also teach us about balance and harmony in relationships with ourselves, each other and with Creation. We are all different, yet all the same, each irreplaceable and yet each alike.

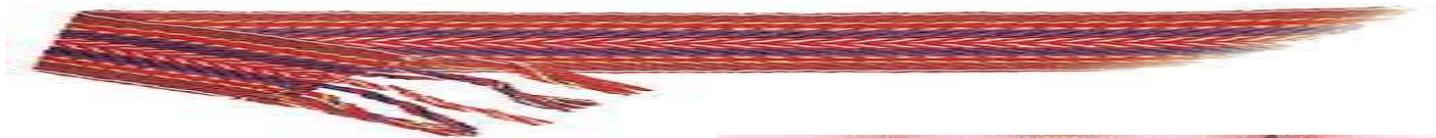


Thoughts from the Circle or Medicine Wheel

The Medicine Wheel or the Circle of Living is really a way of viewing life; it can be represented by a circle, or by any other object, such as a rock, water or even a mirror. It is a very respected, very old and honored model that can be used to teach many things in Aboriginal cultures. There are many variations of how to represent the Medicine Wheel and in this one we will use musical instruments – the Fiddle, drum, rattle and flute. Understanding these instruments in context of the Medicine Wheel, they will provide us with a foundation for the Hepatitis C program guide.

We can look at life through the Medicine Wheel to see the four aspects of our humanness; physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. Each of these aspects fits into a section of the Wheel and provides a visual view of both the differences and the connections between them. People can learn a sense of harmony by working towards balance in the aspects of their life. The way the sections meet in the centre, allows the person to see themselves as connected in physical, mental, emotional and spiritual ways but it also lets them see how if they are tired/lacking sleep, their mind will not function well, their emotions may not be well controlled and their spiritual self is distressed.

The process of using Metis symbolism is deliberately structured to enable peer to peer information sharing. By investing in the person and utilizing a holistic method the goal is to guarantee that fundamental elements of Metis culture drive this Hepatitis C education program, moving it past a general HCV 101 workshop. Additionally this process will also help the facilitators get to know the participants and this may be helpful in building relationships to stimulate future services and care related to Hepatitis C.



Part 1 – The Fiddle

The Wide View of Hepatitis C

The first instrument that gives voice and introduces the rest of the group of instruments is FIDDLE. Fiddle suggests to us the gift of a new day/new way of looking at things/new vision and will offer all of us a Hepatitis C overview across Canada and share a story of the disparity of the number of Aboriginal people, especially Metis living with Hepatitis C.

Lesson One –Mental Segment: Fiddle (complicated, delicate but strong)

What is the FIDDLE? (How it is necessary for each tiny piece of the fiddle, whether in the body, the bridge, or even the strings each piece must be whole and healthy to create beautiful music, just as the parts of the human body must be healthy for your body to work at its best.)

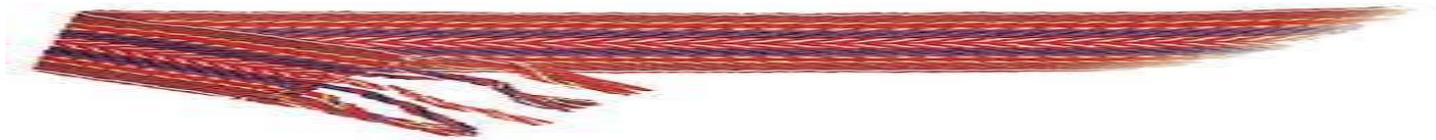
Fiddle has a powerful medicine and voice. It is the one who guides our sight and spiritual journeys. Fiddle gives us a song, sung higher than all the other songs and so can represent a link to the Creator or the world of spirits.

Songs are often used in ceremonies for healing and praying, they represents a connection and call or request to spirit power. Fiddle represents protection, wisdom, strength and clear vision. It can sing alone and represents individuality and leadership, important qualities if one is to take an active role in creating health in our communities since it often seems we travel or work alone.

Another thing we recognize about Fiddle is that it is difficult to craft and more difficult to learn to play but once done it creates song for its life. The union between Fiddle and its Bow as illustrated by playing indicate the cooperation between humans, the process of creating healthy life involves both partners in a relationship working in harmony together. This working together or learning to play the fiddle is not always easy to do, it takes practice and commitment but once learned the result is beautiful.

Fiddle has four main parts, just like the Sacred Circle, it has the body, the bridges, the bow and strings. Fiddle can illustrate to us, as Metis people, the strength and beauty of combing two nations together and how the two become one with characteristics from both but are more than both alone.

The most current National census claims that there are **** hundred thousand people who have identified themselves as Aboriginal, this includes First Nations, Metis and Inuit people, but it does not necessarily reflect those members of our families who are homeless, those who are isolated, those who avoided the census and of equal importance those who do not identify themselves as Aboriginal, due to lack of knowledge, feelings of shame or loss of identity. The number of Aboriginal people is growing, Metis people are among the fastest growing and youngest group in Canada. In Alberta there are *** Aboriginal people, approximately 80,000 of



them are Metis. Over half of all Aboriginal peoples live in urban communities rather than on reserves or Metis Settlements.

In Canada the number of Aboriginal peoples who have tested positive for HCV (Hepatitis C) is believed to be almost one tenth of the population, whereas in non Aboriginal peoples only one one hundredth of them have tested positive for Hepatitis C. These numbers also do not accurately reflect the fact that many Metis people are not counted in the Aboriginal numbers as it is necessary to not only self identify, but many communities/provinces do not identify Metis peoples as distinct and separate peoples. The real count of Hepatitis C in our communities is not readily available. Why might this reality exist?



WHAT IS HEPATITIS C and What Does It Do? The Facts

Lesson Two –Emotional - Rattle – Large outside seen, inside tiny and unseen (cover, stick, grains of sand etc, and tie)

Rattle comes in various sizes, some are quite small but still she has strong medicine in her voice. Rattle teaches us to pay attention, that not everything is as it seems and that even small things are important. In the circle, no matter how young or old, how big or small everything is of equal importance and has a role. For instance if we had no ants or mosquitos, all life would end on earth.

The message in Rattle’s song for people is to pay attention to the small, hidden things, that tiny quiet voice inside us, that whispers “don’t go there, don’t do that” is easy to ignore. It may sound unimportant in all the loud voices, but it is not. It may be the most important voice of all.

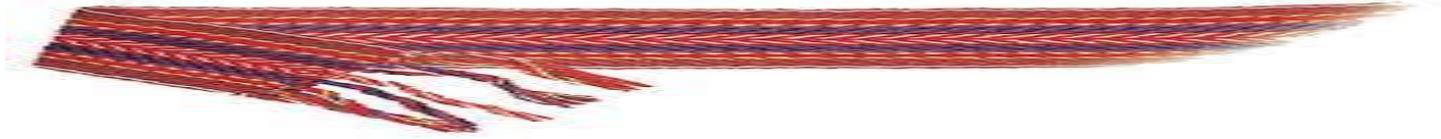
Sometimes, we ignore little things that we see or hear, like

“I noticed sometimes she lied to other people, but I didn’t pay attention to it and now I tested positive with Hepatitis C”

“I used my own needle, but I didn’t know you couldn’t share tattoo ink. It seemed so unimportant”

Listening to my song will help you pay attention to the small things that make up reality. If you want to protect yourself from HCV you need my medicine. Get the facts and pay close attention

Hepatitis C is a virus, an incredibly tiny life form but one which is very strong .It is also referred to as HCV or Hep C. It enters our bodies by blood to blood transmission from a person who tests positive for Hepatitis C to a new person. Often we do not intend or think the activities we do may expose us to disease. Sometimes it is not the big pieces of our behavior that cause us difficulty, but the small things that trip us up and change the outcomes. We need to pay attention to all the details, not just visible ones, to protect us from HCV. Many people know not to share needles, but they forget about the water used to mix drugs, or the tattoo ink used in body art. What are some activities that might spread HCV? – Activity One:



WHAT DOES HEPATITIS C DO?

Once inside the body, Hepatitis C attacks our liver. If not treated Hepatitis C virus can damage the liver severely.

Your liver has to cooperate with all of your body to keep you healthy. It helps clean out all of the toxins in your body, things we eat, drink, breathe in or absorb through the skin. All of the multiple organs and systems that create your whole body have to work together for best health. Lacking a healthy liver, your body encounters a hard time doing the many things we take for granted. Good digestion is dependent on a having a healthy liver, a damaged liver cannot create the necessary proteins required for blood to clot. Without the ability to clot, blood continues to flow from cuts, bruises or other damages. Unhealthy livers cannot properly use the drugs you may need or reduce the toxins and remove them from your body. A healthy liver is absolutely important to your health and so it is of the utmost importance to avoid contracting Hepatitis C. However, if you do become Hepatitis C positive there are things you can do to seek treatment and medications to take to remove Hepatitis C from your liver.

HOW IS HEPATITIS C SPREAD?

Hepatitis C is spread through infected blood from one person entering a healthy person's body in some way. This may happen by accident, by sharing personal hygiene equipment or by risky behaviors which allows contact with another person's body fluid.

Activity two – identifying ways to transmit Hepatitis C and ways to be with people without spreading Hepatitis C.

Lesson Three –Spiritual Section- Flute – caring, offering protection safely

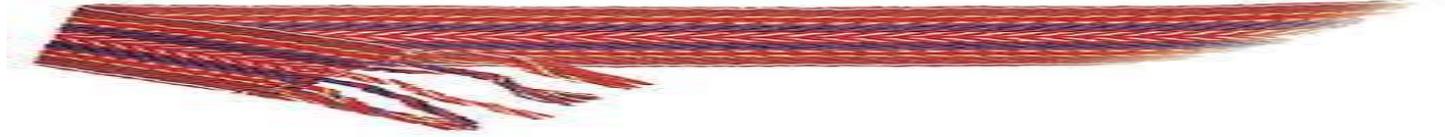
Making Choices

The song from Flute is often played to offer caring and protection. It can be accepted or rejected. The song of the flute is powerful, because it encourages you to look deep into yourself. Doing this allows you to see what really will meet your needs and desires to survive the hardships of life. While listening, Flute can offer to open your heart and soul to possibilities; you must step outside your current place to become fully aware of what might come to you.

When you are inside your human home, you can listen quietly to the voice inside you.

It is the voice who reminds you of who you are and what is important to you. That voice also lets you know what safety you need in a partner and who that partner might be.





If your body is quiet, then your mind and heart can find truthful answers.

Flute will help you decide your footsteps as you walk your path and answer important questions like:

What is important to me?

Do I want to have a child some day?

Do I want to live safely to become an Elder?

Are my behaviors likely to expose me to Hepatitis C?

If I have already contracted HCV on my journey, do I want to find appropriate treatment?

Once you have found your way in life, leave the shelter of your home and take part in the world.

You can sing proud, confident songs like me.

HOW TO STOP HEPATITIS C FROM SPREADING?

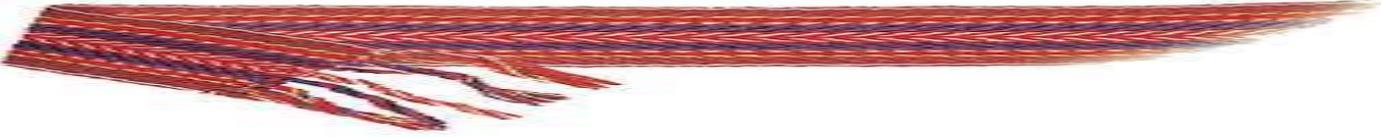
Stopping the spread of HCV or Hepatitis C means paying attention to both large activities and the small parts of activities that can be considered risky. In order to stop the spread of Hepatitis C, you need to stop the transmission of blood between people.

- Sharing Needles is high risk, but so is sharing any pieces used in **injection drug use, pieces such as the water used to mix/melt your drugs, the spoon or “cooker” use to heat the water and drugs in, even the swabs to clean your arm** should not be shared.
- Drug equipment used for smoking drugs such as “crack”, cocaine, (this could include straws, crack pipes or any parts making up crack pipes)
- Body art equipment, (ink, needles and other items used in tattoos or body piercings) can also be contaminated if proper procedures are not used to keep equipment clean and sterile.
- Sharing personal hygiene supplies such as nail clippers, toothbrushes, razors are also ways by which Hepatitis C can be spread.
- Blood from a cut, nose bleed or fight can also spread Hepatitis C if not properly handled. If you have to wipe up, or clean a surface where there may be blood always follow what is referred to as “universal precautions” (there is an explanation of universal precautions at the back of this document)

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU CONTRACT HEPATITIS C?

Hepatitis C affects everyone differently. However, generally speaking the odds are not in your favor.

Physical/Body Affects



20% of people who are infected with Hepatitis C would have the virus clear their bodies within half a year and they would be recovered or test negative for Hepatitis C.

80% of people will develop a chronic infection, which means that they will develop a moderate degree of liver damage; they might not show any symptoms at all.

Of the 80% who develop a chronic infection, about 20 of them or one quarter of the people, will continue to have increased liver disease called Cirrhosis of the liver.

The worst case possible is that up to 4% or (1 – 4) people will advance to liver cancer.

Mental Affects

People vary in their mental responses to Hepatitis C. It is very important to stay positive as holding a positive mental energy can have very beneficial effects on the virus, especially when combined with effective prescription drugs and prescribed therapy. There are various techniques to practice that will assist you to develop a positive mental attitude.

Emotional Affects:

No one can predict what emotional results will happen from contracting Hepatitis C. It is safe to assume that any one will go through a wild roller coaster of emotional responses. This would also be true of anyone fortunate enough to have genetic makeup that will clear the infection on its own. There are however, effective strategies to learn that will assist you to cope with the diagnosis of Hepatitis C.

Offer some strategies and request that participants add their own.

Spiritual Affects:

Hepatitis C can be a special teacher, if we allow it to share its lessons. We can either fall into the despair or seek inner strength to help us deal in positive ways with crisis, that may come with Hepatitis C or others that may face you in future life. How do you find meaning in events? Where do you turn for spiritual strength? Whether your path leads you to traditional spiritual ceremonies such as sweat lodges, smudges, Elders teachings or to contemporary religion, looking within yourself is an important step in finding spiritual strength.

Activity – Three: share some ideas and ask group to generate others that build positive self-thoughts.

Lesson four - the Drum

I am Drum, my medicine may be booming out loud and clear or soft and muted, but it is always potent. I bring the gift of Wisdom to those who will listen to my song. Without my gift or the lesson of wisdom being learned, one runs endlessly, like a dog chasing his own tail, never quite understanding the experience.

Lacking Wisdom, you become only a ghost of your real self, never knowing whether to go or to stay.

The Drum has the Wisdom to know when to sing loud and powerful in a group singing its song for the Pow Wow Dances. I am grounded and powerful then.

The Drum has the Wisdom to sing by myself, calling people to pray. I am grounded and powerful then. I have the wisdom to choose which song is right for me.

Although I can be in a group, to play and sing,

I don't run my life to the group's song

I listen with respect to my entire group, but I don't copy every song they sing.

I pray when my heart is filled with doubt, I give thanks in prayer for many gifts.

Prayer is another gift brought by myself the Drum to all people.

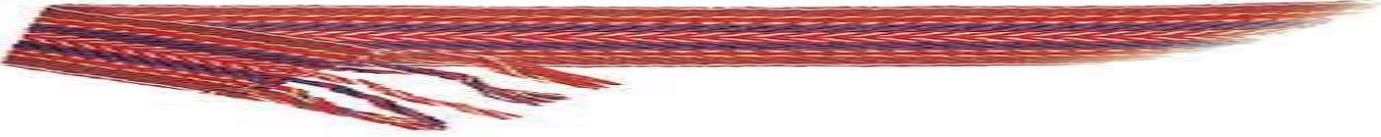


Living with Choices

Each of us has to make choices all the time. It is really all we have to do, make choices and then deal with the results. Sometimes our choices bring us results that we never thought of. It does not make us bad people. If we are fortunate we can change our choices and reduce the effects of unpleasant results. No one can make our choices for us, unless we give up the right and power to determine our own life. Drugs and alcohol when used inappropriately, can rob us of our ability to make healthy, effective choices, they can cloud our judgment; create illusions in our minds that give us false sense of wellness and happiness. It is only when we abandon them – the substitutes for inner peace and knowledge that we begin to realize the drugs and alcohol may have directed us down a dangerous, unhealthy path.

A long time ago, in Aboriginal peoples, our people were not directed “to do this, do that, don't do this or don't do that” People were expected and supported to learn from watching others, from observing nature at work and from making predictions about what might occur if they followed this path or that one.

If someone chooses stability, responsibility, truth and cooperation then the path may be hard and long but it provides satisfaction and happiness. The results of that choice might be a role of leadership, respect, good health and a long life.

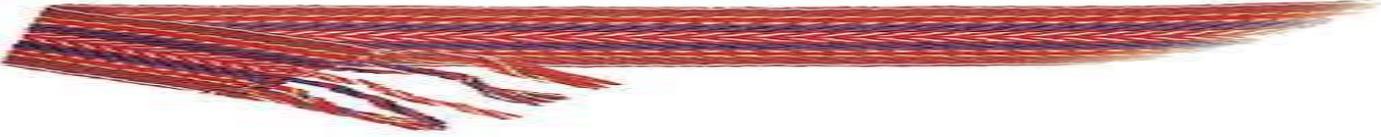


Choosing instability, reality escape through drugs or alcohol, lies and broken promises may in the beginning seem to offer an easy or quick answer to difficulties; however the real costs or consequences may be long lasting and severe. This path may lead to Hepatitis C infection, ill health, incarceration and many other less desirable outcomes. Choosing this path, does not make a person “bad”. The choices he or she made may not be effective, unless of course these things were what the person was seeking.

Whether we make positive, healthy choices to live safe drug free lives, or make choices to invite drugs and alcohol to accompany us on our path, we are each part of the Circle and have an equal place in the Medicine Wheel.

The gift and songs of the Drum are invited into our lives whenever we chose to listen to the heart beat of the world. There are important lessons to be gained from every path, sometimes the hardest path makes the best teacher and opens up the greatest of gifts for us. The power of the Drum helps us stand our ground in the face of adversity.

The Medicine of the Drum helps prevent HCV by encouraging positive decision making, individuality and standing your ground in the face of pressure. How do we resist the lure of unsafe activities, when we may be in a moment of indecision? Activity four;



Activity One

Determine and identify with a check the Risk Level for the Following Activities

Risk	High Risk	Low Risk
Needle Sharing		
Hugging		
Sharing Crack Pipe		
Kissing		
Tattoo ink sharing		
Borrowing nail clippers		
Using Someone else's spoon or Cooker		
Sharing water to mix drugs		
Dancing		
Sharing Ceremonies, such as sweat lodge		
Sharing piercing tools		
Borrowing your brother's razor		
Sharing straws for cocaine snorting		
Having HCV+ person prepare your food		
Sharing hot tub		
Drinking from same glass/cup		
Picking up Kleenex used for nose bleed		