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ALCOHOL AND THE INDIAN-WHITE RELATIONSHIP:
THE FUNCTION OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS IN COAST SALISH SOCIETY

by

LOUISE MATHILDE JILEK-AALL
M.D., University of Zurich, Switzerland
D.T.M., University of Basel, Switzerland
D.Ps., McGill University, Montreal

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Louise M. Jilek-Aall

Department of Anthropology and Sociology

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver 8, Canada

Date Sept. 25, 1972

ABSTRACT

This paper aims at demonstrating the close association of Indian alcohol abuse with the Indian-White relationship as it has developed throughout the contact period. The author became aware of this association in the course of her study of Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) among the Coast Salish Indians. In contrast to the situation obtaining among the Coast Salish Indians, lack of interest in A.A. is reported for most Indian groups of North America. The author reviews Coast Salish culture traits with regard to their relevance to the socio-cultural problems of the Indian population today, and explores the relationship between patterns of alcohol use and abuse and Westernization. Alcohol abuse among British Columbia Indians has become a major factor in social, physical, and mental pathology according to statistical evidence, and it is in this context that the function of A.A. and its efficacy in combating alcoholism is investigated.

Alcoholics Anonymous maintains that all members are equal, regardless of racial, ethnic or religious background. But Indians with alcohol problems find it difficult to speak openly among non-Indians in A.A. Alleged or real discriminations led to the formation of Indian A.A. groups among the Coast Salish some ten years ago, and participation in them has been steadily growing. Patterns of traditional social structure and behaviour are reflected in the way the Coast Salish conduct their A.A. meetings, and this clearly sets their groups apart from other A.A. organizations. Indian A.A. meetings are important social events on the

reserve; sometimes they take the form of a family court, the participants having to justify their behaviour towards kinsmen in front of the whole A.A. group. Considerable discussion is devoted to Indian-White relations, a fact which demonstrates the importance of this conflict area to Indians with alcohol problems. There is a strong emphasis on rebirth through A.A. The "power greater than ourselves" in the A.A. programme is to the local Indian member a syncretic amalgamation of the Christian God with the spirit power of the Salish winter ceremonials. Many Indian A.A. members also attend the revived spirit dances, and the same building is used for both purposes on a local reserve. The author discusses the social movement-aspects of Indian A.A. and the possibility of its development into a nativistic movement. Abstinence from alcohol has been extolled by many religious movements among North American Indians such as the Handsome Lake Religion, the Ghost Dance, the Indian Shaker Church, and the Peyote Cult, which are described in the context of Indian efforts to combat alcoholism.

The inefficiency of purely Western methods of helping Indians with alcohol problems is the basis of the author's conclusion that any assistance rendered by Western agencies, in order to be effective, must rely on Indian initiatives and actively involve the local Indian population. Only anti-alcoholic programmes integrating Indian A.A. groups with Indian community centres and professional consultation services in an organized effort, will have a chance to meet with success.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to explore the alcohol problem of Coast Salish Indians in its relationship to White-Indian contact; to review the measures taken against Indian alcohol abuse, and primarily to evaluate the function of Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) among contemporary Coast Salish Indians.

The study is a consequence of my disappointment at Western therapeutic methods when Indians were referred to me for psychiatric treatment due to alcohol-connected emotional disturbances. The logical consequence was to ask the Indian patients what they themselves considered the reasons for, and the most effective treatment of, their alcohol problems. The answers encouraged a more thorough analysis of the psychological factors operating in Indian alcohol abuse and finally led to a study of Indian participation in the organization of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Data and Methods

The study is based on investigations made during five years of close contact with the native Indian population of the Upper Fraser Valley of British Columbia. The author's task as physician attending to Indian patients, many of them suffering from alcohol-connected health

problems, necessitated a broader understanding of Coast Salish Indian socio-cultural background, of the specific situation of Coast Salish Indians in contemporary Canadian society, and of factors potentially relevant to Indian "problem drinking". For this purpose, the first two years were used to obtain general information through the study of:

- 1) ethnographic and sociological literature on
 - a) Coast Salish Indian aboriginal cultures,
 - b) alcohol use and abuse among North American Indians,¹
 - c) religious and other movements with anti-alcoholic programs operating among Northwest Coast Indians;
- 2) literature on A.A. organizations and their function in Western society;
- 3) literature on A.A. organizations working among North American Indians.

In the following three years, Alcoholics Anonymous meetings were visited, Indian participation observed, and Indian persons questioned and interviewed regarding alcohol problems and the merits of A.A. When interviewing informants, a questionnaire (see Appendix) was used as a guide. Discussions with Indian leaders were sought to learn their views on alcohol problems among their people.

The use and abuse of alcohol is widespread among the Indian population as well as among non-Indians in North America, and cannot be

1. The historical development of alcohol use and abuse and the changes in drinking patterns among North American Indians have been discussed elsewhere by this author (Jilek-Aall 1971).

regarded as a specifically Indian problem. Only Indians who felt that alcohol abuse had created major troubles for themselves and their families, and who therefore wanted help, or made some effort to abstain from drinking, were regarded as persons with alcohol problems, whether their alcohol abuse had the character of alcohol habituation or of periodic excessive drinking.

The numbers of Indian persons with self-defined alcohol problems interviewed were as follows:

Persons not attending A.A.	24;
Persons with some A.A. experience but no active membership	28;
Active A.A. members	35.

A great deal of information regarding Indian use and abuse of alcohol was gathered in numerous discussions with participants of Indian cultural activities, and, above all, Indian A.A. meetings. The author was often invited to the homes of prominent members of the Indian community for further discussions.

Even before commencing the present study, the author was familiar with the general A.A. organization in Eastern Canada and in British Columbia in the context of treating non-Indian alcoholics.

The A.A. meetings attended during the research period were:

Meetings of general A.A. groups	18
Meetings of Indian A.A. groups	64.

The A.A. groups involved were as follows:

Chilliwack Group: Convening at the Upper Fraser Valley Mental Health Centre, this is a non-Indian A.A. group with meetings (every Friday evening) usually frequented by 20 to 40 members. The group was founded about 1950. A few Indians are occasionally present.

Sardis Group: Convening at Sardis Secondary School, it was founded about 1955. The majority of its members are non-Indians. This group used to meet once a week, but has disintegrated. The few remaining members now get together only sporadically.

Agassiz Group I: Meeting at the Agassiz Community Hall, this group was founded about 1963 as a general A.A. group with Indian participation. Three years ago Indian members broke away and formed their own group, moving to another locality (Agassiz Group II).

Agassiz Group II: Indian A.A. group meeting in a small building which belongs to the Catholic Church, or in the community hall of Seabird Island Indian Reserve. Attendance varies from 4 to 20 members, who convene on most Sunday evenings.

Wellington Group: Indian A.A. group meeting in a small schoolhouse on Wellington Reserve near Chilliwack, or in a classroom of St. Mary's School, Chilliwack. The group was founded about 1962. Meetings are usually attended by 20 to 40 members who convene every Thursday. A few non-Indians are usually present.

Lummi Group: Indian A.A. group located near the Lummi Indian Tribal Council Office, Marietta, Washington; founded 1964. Approximately 40 Indian members. Usually visited by a small group of non-Indian A.A. members.

Recording Techniques

During A.A. meetings the speeches were recorded in writing as completely as possible. Initially the emphasis was on a correct presentation of content and flavour of the speeches. It was soon discovered that Indian and non-Indian A.A. members alike are quite repetitious in their speech-making and it was therefore possible to write down parts of the speeches verbatim. Tape-recordings were not made in A.A. meetings by the author, but tapes could be borrowed from A.A. members who openly record during the meetings. Some of the quotations in the text are, therefore, transcriptions of tape-recorded speeches. During interviews exact notes could be taken, whereas conversations and discussions following the A.A. meetings were recorded in writing immediately afterwards. Those quotations in this paper which might not be exactly verbatim are presented under quotation marks within the text, whereas verbatim quotations are set apart.

I wish to thank the members of the Indian A.A. groups for their cordial invitations to attend their meetings and for their readiness to provide me with information. I have been impressed by their honesty in discussing all aspects of the Indian alcohol problem, and hope that this study, which would have been impossible without their cooperation, will draw attention to their efforts and assist in the planning of a future strategy to combat alcoholism.

I am especially indebted to Mr. and Mrs. Allan Gutierrez of Yarrow, B.C.; Mr. Alec James of Wellington Reserve, Chilliwack; Mr. Walker Stogan of Musqueam, B.C.; Mr. Buck and Mrs. Willafred Washington of Marietta, Washington, for the many hours they willingly spent with me discussing every aspect of the Indian-White relationship, the Indian alcohol problem, and the best ways of handling Indian alcohol abuse, in the future.

This thesis was prepared under the supervision of Professor Wilson Duff for whose suggestions and encouragement I am especially grateful. I am also indebted for the advice I received from Dr. David F. Aberle and Dr. Pierre Maranda of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of British Columbia.

North American Indian Groups and Alcoholics Anonymous

There are few published references to Indian participation in A.A. organizations throughout North America. To supplement the references found in the literature, the author contacted several author-²ities and organizations in North America. The data obtained convey the impression that A.A. is very rarely utilized by North American Indians.

2. J.H. Shore, Chief of Mental Health Office, Indian Health Service, Portland Area, Oregon, U.S.A.
 A.P. Abbott, Zone psychiatrist, Yukon Territory, Canada.
 R.L. Bergman, Chief of Mental Health Programs, U.S. Indian Health Service.
 J.D. Bloom, Psychiatrist Consultant to Indian Agencies in Alaska.
 J.G. Jorgensen, Professor, Department of Anthropology, Univ. of Michigan, U.S.A.
 R.W. Brown, Director, Ute Tribe Alcoholism Program, Utah, U.S.A.
 P. MacDonald, Chairman of the Navaho Tribal Council, Window Rock, Arizona, U.S.A.

Bergman, in a personal communication states that there has never been a Navaho A.A. group lasting more than two years and that most such ventures have been even more short-lived. His observation that the few Indians attending A.A. groups are mostly quite "acculturated" people not living on reservations, had previously been made by Dozier (1966).

"Alcoholics Anonymous is perhaps more successful than psychotherapy, but it appeals again primarily to the individual addict. Nevertheless among Indians off the reservation and in densely populated areas, the idea has caught on. Recently an American Indian A.A. group has been formed in Santa Clara, California, and another is being started in Oakland, California. A.A. apparently influences the highly acculturated Indian alcoholic who has internalized the cultural values of the dominant American culture....Individual oriented types of aids provided by psychotherapy and A.A....are generally unsatisfactory to the less acculturated (Indians)." (Dozier 1966, pp. 85-86)

Lemert (1954), who investigated the use of alcohol among Indians of British Columbia, mentioned that although several towns had quite active A.A. programs in 1952, he could only find two Indians who were A.A. members; one a highly educated Metis, the other a detribalized Indian woman married to a Finnish logger.

Jorgensen sees the main reason for the lack of Indian interest in A.A. in the resentment Indians harbour towards the White majority:

"I do not know of any studies of Alcoholics Anonymous on American Indian reservations. A.A. is a recent phenomenon on the reservations where I have done most of my work.... As far as the successes of the A.A. program at Northern Ute, I really don't have a very good impression at this point. Some young men on antabuse refused to drink during a major festival -- so they were resisting temptation. Some, too, asked me to trot them back to the A.A. house on several

occasions so that they would not succumb. My overall feeling is that the context in which Northern Utes reside is too oppressive to allow A.A. to resolve the drinking problems of most Indians, and I think drinking problems are nourished by oppression." (Personal communication; letter to the writer, March 22, 1972)

Similar reasons were given by Lemert:

"We have a great deal of difficulty in getting reservation Indians interested in A.A. because they interpret it as another form of restraint on their freedom....Our Iroquois member and one other had difficulties because in their speeches they carried over a sense of inferiority and emotions of resentment against the wrongs done to the Indians, despite the fact that they received unqualified acceptance from our white members." (Lemert 1954, p. 360)

Littman (1970), reviewing fifty-five references on alcoholism, illness and social pathology among North American Indians, allotted only the following few lines of his publication to A.A.:

"Alcoholics Anonymous has by and large, not had much appeal among American Indians, perhaps because of its emphasis on the alcoholic's need to admit his personal weakness. This very concept, is I believe, offensive to most Indians. Nor are the religious overtones of the A.A. program acceptable to many Indian alcoholics. Frequently Indians consider this 'a white man's program' which is unacceptable to them. I understand that A.A. has had some success on certain reservations when non-alcoholic family members, including children, were allowed to become involved. A Navaho explained it to me this way: 'We don't like to be exclusive. When we become exclusive we lose touch with our people'." (Littman 1970; p. 1782)

Shore (1970) also refers to the Indian dislike for confession-type speeches expected in A.A.:

"Few Indian people suffering from the effects of alcohol abuse have been helped by traditional medical approach to alcohol rehabilitation or through non-Indian chapters of Alcoholics Anonymous....A.A. chapters continue to function on several Indian reservations, although in general Indian drinkers have reacted by withdrawal when asked to participate in integrated groups in which confession of one's drinking behaviour is of major importance." (Shore 1970)

Shore maintains that non-Indians might at times be successful in including some Indians in their A.A. groups. According to Brown (personal communication, 1972) there is little indication that Ute Indians would continue attending A.A. meetings without non-Indian leadership: "On several occasions there has been little or no attendance at A.A. meetings when the non-Indian leaders were absent".

Most personal communications to the author stressed as one of the main reasons for the lack of Indian participation in A.A. the dislike Indians have for confession-type speeches heard at A.A. meetings and their disinclination to talk about themselves, especially when expected to emphasize their personal failures and weaknesses. Why then has A.A. been able to gain support and to find members among the Coast Salish Indians?

In traditional Coast Salish culture a person's social position depended to a great extent upon his knowledge of the moral code and his personal conduct. The moral standing, especially of high ranking persons, was of public concern; vices and virtues of such a person were often publicly discussed. Although admission of "sins" might originally not have been a feature of Coast Salish culture, the belief that the breaking of certain taboos causes misfortune which may be averted or relieved through avowal, seems to be old in some regions of native North America. According to Suttles (1957) this belief was found in many areas, such as among the Central Eskimos, the Algonquins of the North-

east and the Yurok of Northwestern California. Suttles further claims that individual confession before death was practiced among Plateau Indians before the influence of Christianity. Spier, reporting on a separate "confession dance" in the Southern Okanagon in response to anxiety caused by "strange natural happenings", writes:

"Young and old gathered in a circle about a chief within a house, where they stood rhythmically swaying while he confessed his sins and called on each in turn to do likewise." (Spier 1935, p. 8).

This "confession dance" was part of the Prophet Dance of the Plateau, which spread to the lower Mainland and the Pacific Coast before the coming of the first priests. Its influence might explain some peculiar practices found among Coast Salish Indians of the lower Fraser Valley, generations before the first contact with Whites (Hill-Tout 1902). Here as in the Okanagon the occasions for these religious ceremonies were either public calamities such as epidemics, famines, earthquakes, violent storms and the like; or the anticipation of some sort of deprivation, such as loss of status and goods, imposed socio-cultural changes, conquest by a more powerful group, etc. (Aberle 1959). The chief would lead the prayers and confessions of the people to invoke the pity of the supernatural forces or to strengthen his own social position. At the close of the dancing the chief would "bid them place their hands on their breasts and repent of their evil deeds and thoughts" (Hill-Tout 1902). Suttles (1957) quotes Elmendorf as describing a marriage dance among the Twana Indians, which was apparently performed long

before the White man came: "The people danced in a circle and married by choosing a man. They confessed sins." Both Hill-Tout and Elmendorf thus concede the element of confession might be of genuinely native origin.

The "Dreamers" of the Smohalla religion had similar rituals. While people were dancing in a circle, clapping their hands, anyone who wished to speak could step forward and "tell his story" (MacMurray 1886) or his dreams which were commented upon by the "high priest" (Du Bois 1939).

Another form of confession exists in the Shaker Church of the Coast Salish: the public announcement of a member's conversion. During a Sunday ceremony a member may stand up and voluntarily testify to the regenerative and healing powers of the religion as it has been disclosed to him (Barnett 1957).

From these references one might conclude that confession-type public speeches are nothing new or offensive to Coast Salish Indians. Awareness of the danger of further disintegration of their aboriginal culture together with the conscious desire to reinforce Indian identity (Suttles 1963), lets the Coast Salish Indian of today look favourably on organizations which stress personal improvement and abstinence from alcohol, and which provide for the regular meeting of people from different Indian reserves.

The present study also attempts to demonstrate how Indian A.A. groups help the Coast Salish people to find continuity with their tradi-

tional culture in the same way as do the revived spirit dance ceremonial, Indian canoe racing, slahal games, the Indian Shaker Church, and other contemporary intergroup activities.

Coast Salish Indian Culture Traits in Relation to Socio-Cultural Problems of Today

The period of contact between the Salish Indians and modern Western society has been relatively short. There are still Indians living whose fathers saw the first white men coming to settle in the Fraser Valley. When studying contemporary Indian behaviour and acculturation difficulties it is therefore necessary to know the pre-settlement Indian culture. In this chapter, culture traits which are still present and of importance to the Indians -- and at the same time cause difficulties in their adjustment -- will be pointed out.

The abundance of game and sea-food in the wide, easily accessible areas of the Coast Salish, allowed for a generous usage of resources. Although heads of families often had a certain right to fishing and hunting places (Barnett 1955), usually a whole village -- or cluster of villages -- owned the surrounding territories over which each unit roamed with equal freedom (Smith 1941). Frequent use by one group of people of certain localities, could lead to the view that the place "belonged" to them, but there was seldom any attempt to exclude friendly members of other communities (Elmendorf 1960). The village as such was not a self-contained social unit; the kinship group was the most important property-holding entity. The property rights of the kin

groups were spread over large areas and many villages through marriage ties. The earlier White authorities, therefore, did not comprehend the nature of Coast Salish intervillage relationships and of local property rights. When laying out Indian reserves according to old village sites, they imposed restrictions on the ambilineal descent and ambilocal residence pattern of native social organization, thereby destroying much of the intricate aboriginal social network (Suttles 1963). The Coast Salish Indians still keep track of their family ties and show stronger solidarity with their kindred living in other bands than with other families residing on the same reserve:

"Non-kin or remote kin on the same reserve may see little or nothing of each other. Near kin on different reserves may be in close contact -- made even closer by modern means of transportation and communication." (Suttles 1963, p. 517)

This close intervillage kinship system is one of the reasons why true community life is seldom seen on Salish Indian reserves. Due to the fact that families of different kin groups are locating together on the same reserve, it is difficult to organize community cooperation for reserve projects. A further obstacle to organized progress on the reserves is the fact that the Coast Salish did not have village chiefs with authority over the villagers, nor other authority figures with institutionalized powers; neither did they have clans, phratries, or other larger social units. Barnett has probably given the clearest definition of Coast Salish social structure, in the form of negative statements:

"Among the Salish the highest unit of common allegiance was the extended family. There was no tribe or state; hence there was no offences against or loyalty to either. There were no tribal officers, no council, no bodies for the enactment, adjustment or enforcement of regulations." (Barnett 1955, p. 241)

Individual rank and social striving was relevant within the extended family. The "chief" of an extended kin group among the Coast Salish corresponded to what Sahlins has described as a "big-man" (Sahlins 1962/63, p. 289) who is not installed as a political figure. His authority derives from personal power and from his acknowledged standing in interpersonal relations. The Coast Salish Chief, or siɛ'm, was usually one of the oldest men of the family; he was the headman of the household. Individual knowledge, good behaviour, and the ability to accumulate goods, which then were distributed during potlatches, gave the siɛ'm prestige and made him respected and looked upon as a leader among other household heads. In times of crisis he was expected to give advice and guidance (Duff 1952). The combination of (1) personal qualities such as wisdom and good behaviour, (2) status within the extended family as household head, and (3) ability to redistribute goods in potlatches, was necessary for a man to be accepted as group leader. These qualifications are different from those of the political and social authorities with whom the Indians have to deal today. "No man has the right to order me around", is an angry statement often heard from local Indians, not only when facing orders by bosses or governmental agents but also when confronted with demands by leaders of modern Indian organizations.

We have numerous descriptions of the huge plank houses in which the Coast Salish used to live (Hill-Tout 1902; Haeberlin and Gunther 1930; Olson 1936; Duff 1952; Jenness 1955, and others). It was the pride of the household to have as many relatives and friends as possible living under the same roof. Due to the kinship structure of the Coast Salish, where paternal and maternal relatives were equated throughout the system, the household could grow very large. It consisted of a nucleus of males; a man, his brothers, sons and grandsons, their wives and children, around whom were grouped uncles and nephews, grandparents, parents-in-law, widows, orphans and other kin, not to mention visiting friends and other relatives (Duff 1952; Olson 1936). The Indians of today still keep in contact with numerous relatives, "living in each other's houses", as one old Indian put it, visiting and feasting together frequently. The houses provided for the Indians today are built according to modern patterns, meant to house a nuclear family and perhaps also grandparents or a few guests. But the trend to gather as many relatives as possible under one roof is still deeply entrenched and often causes difficulties and frustrations. This is one of the reasons why the small houses are often extremely overcrowded, which again results in a desperate lack of comfort and hygiene. As in olden days, relatives are spread over large areas. Family ties are strong and there is a considerable pressure to attend marriages, funerals or other gatherings (Suttles 1960). This takes time and frequently conflicts with work schedules in modern society. The Indian is confron-

ted with the alternatives of either facing the disapproval of his relatives or losing his job, and both prospects cause tension and anxiety.

Friendly, cooperative, and non-aggressive behaviour, so important for adjustment in the crowded long-houses of the past, still prevails as a highly valued quality of a Coast Salish Indian. Disapproval, gossiping and shaming is still more feared than physical coercion. "We were taught by our grandparents to respect anybody older than ourselves, and rather to walk away than to fight" -- this reason is often given as excuse for passive behaviour today. Indians trying to live up to the "Indian ways" will unavoidably be at a disadvantage in modern competitive society.

Every Coast Salish Indian, without regard to his social standing, would seek supernatural power in traditional times. Ardent and vigorous training led to the acquisition of guardian spirit power, considered essential for success in life (Hill-Tout 1904; Barnett 1955; Duff 1952; and many others). The revival of the Coast Salish Spirit dancing in recent years demonstrates that Christianity in all its currently declining forms could never fully substitute for the old religious system with its stress on individual spirit power rather than on a distant God shared by everybody.

No description of Coast Salish culture, and its influence on thought and behaviour of contemporary Indians, can be complete without mention of the potlatch.

"In the past the major intergroup gathering, the potlatch, was the most spectacular part of an economic system by which the Coast Salish population survived in a natural environment of fluctuating productivity." (Suttles 1963, p. 523)

Everyone would look forward to a potlatch. Everybody would be willing to work a little harder, eat and sleep a little less, in order to produce goods to be used in the potlatch feasts. Nothing spurred ambition and cooperation more than the happy thought of a coming potlatch; nowhere was there a better opportunity for becoming known to friends and neighbours than during potlatch-time, and nobody could acquire social prestige without giving a potlatch. Social life, artistic skills, ritual performances, trade and wealth centered around this event. Christian leaders fought the potlatch, and when it was finally prohibited in 1884 (LaViolette 1959), cooperation between the Coast Salish people diminished, the incentive to work was undermined, and the paraphernalia used in the ceremonies no longer held much meaning. Therefore, when the potlatch disappeared, traditional Indian culture rapidly disintegrated. Life on the reserves became dull and uninteresting and then depression and apathy took hold of the Indian people.

The excessive use of alcohol in reaction to depression, hopelessness and anxiety, described among Indians of our time, is a frequent topic of discussion in literature (Horton 1943; Hamer 1965; Erikson 1963; Robertson 1970). Other authors attribute the abuse of alcohol among Indians to its euphoric effects (Lemert 1954; Du Toit 1958) or to its ability to release pent-up hostility and to make the individual sink into an all-forgetting stupor (Devereux 1949; Dozier 1966; Hamer 1961; James 1961).

Lemert (1954; 1958) describes how the use of alcohol became integrated into Coast Salish culture patterns. When the potlatch was outlawed, the whiskey feast took its place. Barrels of whiskey and rum were substituted for food. As in the old rivalry potlatches, singing of satirical and insulting songs became a more or less intrinsic feature of these "challenge feasts". Old men and women were invited to such parties because of their general status or because they could sing drinking songs and tell stories. Again, the Indians could gain prestige by being generous and giving away wealth, this time in the form of alcohol.

As we have seen, one of the norms of Indian behaviour is that of personal restraint. Emotional outbursts, quarrels and fights are generally avoided and anger is seldom shown. No society however, can function normally without providing effective outlets for aggression. Indian society had a number of such outlets, such as warfare, hunting activities, rivalry potlatches, competitive games, accusations of witchcraft, etc. (Kluckhohn 1967; Devereux 1949; Dozier 1966). Most traditional expressions of aggression have been suppressed in the course of Westernisation, and new sources of aggressive feelings have been created by the fact that the Coast Salish people have become increasingly deprived and have been made powerless by Western man. Both these aspects, the loss of traditional means to channel aggression and the mounting hostility due to outside oppression, have left the Indian people deeply frustrated. Violent outbursts during drinking bouts have

become a regulatory mechanism for the Indian of today: "Indians fight among themselves when drunk and seldom remember these altercations when sober," (Hamer 1965).

Drunken behaviour is looked upon with tolerance. The aggressive person is among drinking friends and relatives who permit the catharsis of hostility to take place (Lemert 1954). The fear and tolerant acceptance of a drunken person, often shown by Indians, is reminiscent of the awe people felt for those possessed by supernatural power. The inebriated person is obviously not in control of his senses and therefore not to be blamed for his violent acts. Drunkenness, especially during the early period of contact with the White man, was included in the category of the supernatural. Alcohol gives the Indian the feeling of personal power he so sorely lacks when dealing with modern society. Through alcohol he has visionary experiences that take him back to the world of his ancestors. Old people who still remember -- or heard about -- the Indians' first encounter with alcohol, remember the different powers at work. In the words of an Indian A.A. veteran:

"Indian life was a spiritual life. The only way of expressing the Indian way was spiritual. Everything was spiritual about the Indian, you see. Before the White man came, they had power within themselves. The priests said Indian power was the Devil's power. They gave us alcohol. Power from outside. My grandfather said it was the devil's power. They called it firewater, it made the poor people feel rich, the old feel young, they felt happy and could dance again. But my grandfather said, throw away that White man's power, the false spirit of alcoholism."

The ways in which the relationship between Indians and Whites is influenced by alcohol will be discussed later (pp. 40-45).

Whatever the reason for Indian drinking, alcohol abuse has become an increasing factor in Indian ill-health. The U.S. Indian Health Service Task Force on Alcohol has stamped alcoholism as, "one of the most significant and urgent health problems facing the Indians today". A report by the Director General of the Medical Services for Indian Affairs in 1969, presented some startling facts regarding B.C. Indians. Indian males, aged 25-34 years, died at the rate of 12 per 1,000, compared with only 1.6 per 1,000 of other young Canadian males of the same age in British Columbia. Whereas the mortality rate among young Indian females has always been high, it appears to be on the increase among young Indian males. This rising mortality in the prime of life is apparently associated with alcohol abuse and attributable to a growing number of fatal accidents, violent acts and suicides. ³ Schmitt et al. (1966) reporting on accidental deaths among British Columbia Indians, summed up this situation:

"A statistical and epidemiological review of British Columbia native Indian and non-Indian mortality revealed that accidents were the leading cause of death among Indians but ranked only fourth among non-Indians. Comparison of accidental death rates by age and sex showed that, without exception, the rates among Indians were considerably higher than the corresponding rates for non-Indians. While the Indians represented some 2% of the total population of British Columbia, they accounted for over 10% of the total accident fatalities, 29% of drowning, and 21% of fatal burns. Socio-economic, environmental and psychosocial factors and excessive drinking are considered the chief causes responsible for this rather unusual epidemiological phenomenon."

3. "The First Citizen", November 1969.

The abuse of alcohol and the resulting damage to psychological and physical health has long been considered a major health problem by the medical profession. However, until recently little has been done to combat these effects in a comprehensive manner (Shore 1970).

It is in this context that we studied the functions of Alcoholics Anonymous among Coast Salish Indians. The organization of A.A. has proven to be an effective weapon in the fight against alcoholism in Western society. Many authors have found that A.A., as conducted by non-Indians, has little appeal to Indians. This raises the question of whether an Indian A.A. organization is better able to help the Indians solve their alcohol problems.

CHAPTER II

COMPARISON OF NON-INDIAN AND INDIAN A.A. MEETINGS

The Conduct of Non-Indian and Indian A.A. Meetings

Upon entering the room where a non-Indian A.A. meeting is to take place, one is usually greeted by a member posted at the door for that purpose. New members and visitors are asked their first name, their problems and why they come to the meeting. They are welcomed with friendly words. Before the meeting gets underway, people look at A.A. literature on display, and one A.A. member gives information and encourages those interested to read and to take pamphlets home for further study. At the set time the meeting is opened by the chairman. Most participants are present by then; only very few arrive later in the evening. Both the chairman and the secretary take an active part in the meeting and have distinct roles. The chairman urges members to come forward to speak. He takes notes during their speeches, makes comments, and starts the discussion, cracking jokes and keeping the audience active and interested. The secretary's job is to take note of the members and guests present, write summaries of speeches and discussions, announce further A.A. meetings and related activities, and collect and count money. As a rule there is a short break after about an hour. Everybody helps himself to the coffee, sandwiches, cakes and other foods brought by the members. Conversation and discussion is lively and general, until the chairman calls everybody back and the meeting goes on as before.

An A.A. meeting is supposed to last for about two hours, and as it generally starts at 8 p.m., the chairman will close the meeting at 10 p.m. Sometimes he may have to interrupt the last speakers to keep the schedule, but most participants accept this without difficulty as punctuality in opening and closing a meeting is appreciated by most members. Some people may stay on for a while, looking at A.A. literature or conversing with friends, but the majority will leave rather quickly after the end of the meeting. If women are present, they usually clean up the place.

Arriving at a meeting on time does not seem to be of much importance to Indians attending A.A. The chairman in Indian A.A. therefore usually opens the meeting later than announced. But even then only a few members might be present at the start. People "drop in" during the whole evening, so that eventually the place is crowded. There is a constant coming and going during an Indian A.A. meeting, and although everybody turns his head curiously towards noisy newcomers, few Indians are disturbed by this. Non-Indians present are annoyed and often find it difficult to continue their speeches after the interruptions. The chairman and the secretary in Indian A.A. groups remain passive during the meeting. Their duties are not well defined, and they may decide to switch roles during the meeting. If a decision has to be taken, chairman and secretary will first discuss it between themselves, and either one may then announce their decision. The coffee break is very important. It is held in the middle of the meeting or at the end, but sometimes at both times. Women busy themselves with offering the participants food and coffee. "Anniversary cakes" are very much enjoyed

and carefully distributed. During the coffee break Indians do not interact as freely with each other as non-Indians do, but tend to gather in small groups, well apart from each other. It may take considerable time before everybody gets seated again and the meeting continues. Seldom is an Indian A.A. meeting closed at the scheduled time. To interrupt a speaker because of time limits would be bad taste and go unheeded anyway. People seem to forget keeping track of time, especially if they enjoy the speeches; until fatigue makes them realize that it is late. Babies cheer up the meeting with their cries; children run in and out; the general atmosphere is relaxed and friendly. Members and guests get up and leave whenever they choose. Few bother to look at A.A. literature, if there is any at all. Only sporadic efforts are made to clean up the place.

Summary -- Conduct of A.A. Meetings:

Non-Indians

Meetings usually held from 8 to 10 p.m.;

This schedule adhered to by all members;

Welcome person at the door.

A.A. literature on display.

Chairman and secretary active, their roles well defined.

Coffee-break short; self-service.

Speaking time restricted.

Place cleaned up superficially.

Indians

Meetings opened later than scheduled;

Members come and go during the meeting; which usually closes later than 10 p.m.

No welcome person at the door.

A.A. literature rarely on display.

Chairman and secretary passive, their roles not well defined.

Coffee-break long; women serve the others.

Speaking time usually unrestricted.

Place rarely cleaned up.

Views Regarding Anonymity

Tolerance of drunken behaviour and alcohol abuse is remarkable in North America, among Indians and non-Indians alike. The use of alcohol and so-called permissive drinking is fully accepted and supported by middle class North Americans; abstinence has become a "negative symbol of life style" (Pittman 1967). However, in Western society there is a sharp line drawn in people's tolerance of drinking behaviour. As long as a person drinks and gets drunk only occasionally this is well tolerated and often laughed at. But being an alcoholic is viewed as shameful and disgraceful to the whole family, and alcoholism is denied and masked for a long time. Under the pretext of suffering from "nervousness", "depression", or other illnesses, medical treatment resources are sought; to suggest help through A.A. is often taken as personal insult. Only when all treatment efforts have failed and alcohol addiction has become manifest at home and at work, will the alcoholic yield to social pressures and consider joining the A.A. organization. But even after having made this decision, many alcoholics deny their membership in A.A. and go to great lengths to keep it a secret, as A.A. is held in low esteem among non-alcoholics. The man in the street looks upon A.A. as a sectarian organization, frequented by alcoholic bums, who have no other means of escaping the bottle. Anonymity is therefore of vital importance to many alcoholics. Some will only attend A.A. meetings far from their place of residence. As members are known only to each other and referred to by their first names, they

can feel at ease at A.A. meetings in distant places. Outside the meetings, members are supposed to treat each other as strangers.

Most Indians attending A.A. meetings seem to show little concern about anonymity. Many Indians do not know exactly what it means and quite frequently the word is mispronounced, as "amonity"; "amoni-mity"; "anominity", etc. Calling each other by the first name is to them a sign of friendship and in Indian A.A. is understood as a mere ritual. It can be side-stepped by announcing: "I am now breaking the anonymity...the man I speak about is Mr. N.N.", and none of the Indian members seems to object to that. Often anonymity is looked upon as something meant specifically for White A.A. members:

"It means that White people don't want anybody to know that they were at the meeting."

"Amonity (sic) is something regarding the Whites."

"It's an excuse for White people not to greet an Indian on the street."

One of the reasons for their lack of concern regarding anonymity is that most Indians attending A.A. meetings in the Coast Salish region know each other anyway. As one Indian A.A. member explained:

"Anonymity does not bother me, it makes no difference whether it gets out of this room or not, because most of the community knows it anyhow...somebody will always know what's going on."

Indians who know very well what anonymity means in Western society, often regard it as a negative principle:

"In our (Indian) group it seems like a family sharing everything with each other. Sometimes we take our teenagers along, they come with their parents. We like them to take part in

our problems, know about it. But the Whites don't like that. That's why some of them refused to get up and talk in our last meeting. The White A.A. is too anonymous, it's easier that way, but we don't like it."

There is no doubt that divergent views on anonymity was one of the factors in the secession of the Indians from general A.A. These divergent views account for differences in attendance of A.A. meetings in non-Indian and Indian groups.

Who Attends Non-Indian and Indian A.A. Meetings

As outlined above, being an alcoholic and joining A.A. is looked down upon in Western society. Most non-Indian alcoholics will therefore deny their condition and think of themselves as normal persons who have developed some bad drinking habits, for which they need a little help. No wonder therefore that those who finally join A.A., are hardcore, chronic alcoholics, usually in their thirties or older, who often have lost their jobs and also their families and friends; solitary drinkers with personality defects or other psychopathology. Some of these alcoholics join A.A. because of loneliness and despair, mostly introduced by a friend who has been helped by the organization; others use A.A. for purposes of manipulation. The latter category of A.A. participants are often younger sociopathic individuals in difficulty with the law, their employers or family. Joining A.A. might help them to obtain milder judgements, to be paroled earlier and to be viewed more favourably by probation officers or employers. These members

1. That non-Indians use A.A. for manipulative purposes more frequently than do Indians, was confirmed by one of the most respected and oldest members of non-Indian A.A. in the region.

tend to avoid A.A. meetings as soon as they have achieved their purpose.

The few non-Indian women seen in A.A. are usually physically and mentally deteriorated persons. They look older than they are and appear timid and depressed. Their attendance is only sporadic, unless they have private interpersonal motives.

Outsiders are generally discouraged from attending A.A. meetings. Non-alcoholic speakers are invited for educational purposes, and clergymen, probation officers, social workers, physicians or other professionals under obligation to preserve confidentiality are welcome to sit in on occasion. Anxious observance of anonymity is the main reason for a rather negative attitude towards visits by non-alcoholics.

Due to the Indians' lack of concern for anonymity, relatives and friends are welcome at Indian A.A. gatherings; mothers may take their babies and small children along and often teenagers crowd in a corner, privately having fun together.

Lemert (1958) found drinking among three Coast Salish Indian tribes to be "exclusively social", and maintained that Indians drinking excessively could seldom be labelled true alcoholics, because they did not become social isolates as a consequence of their drunkenness. Drunken behaviour with maltreatment of the family did not usually lead to marriage break-up or loss of family support. According to Lemert, alcohol abuse among Indians was not looked upon as grounds for divorce. Lemert also asserted that most Indians did not have enough cash to

procure a continuous supply of liquor; Indian drinking excesses would therefore occur only in bouts, mostly of short duration.

Unfortunately alcohol abuse among Coast Salish Indians has developed into a more serious problem since Lemert wrote his paper in 1958. As we tried to demonstrate above (pp. 18-19) alcoholism -- if we use this term according to the definition of the World Health Organization² -- is on the increase, especially among the younger generation of Indians. The young Indian alcoholic has more conflicts with White society than with his own people. Frequent fines, arrests, prison terms, institutionalization, etc., interfere with his private life, often to such a degree that he joins A.A. in an effort to maintain sobriety to escape further molestation. Accordingly, one finds that Indian men frequenting A.A. meetings are of a younger age group (18 to 30) than their non-Indian counterparts (30 to 50). Many young Indian women join their brothers, boy-friends or husbands in drinking sprees, and not a few of these Indian women have alcohol problems. But since alcohol abuse is of greater consequence to the whole family in the case of women, they are found in A.A. groups even before becoming true alcoholics. Indian A.A. meetings are therefore attended by many more women than are general A.A. meetings.

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2. Alcoholics are those excessive drinkers whose dependence upon alcohol has attained such a degree that it results in noticeable mental disturbance, or in an interference with their bodily and mental health, their interpersonal relations, their smooth social and economic functioning, or those who show the prodromal signs of such developments.

Due to the aggressiveness of intoxicated Indian males, many of them are constantly in and out of prison. Prison camps situated in the Lower Mainland are frequented by Indians from outside who attend A.A. meetings in the prison because they very often have friends or relatives doing terms for alcohol-connected offences. Inmates are allowed to attend A.A. meetings in the communities if outside A.A. members stand bail for them. Indian A.A. members are eager to do so, and as they tend to sympathize with prisoners in general, they frequently bail out non-Indian prisoners, too. At Indian A.A. meetings held in the vicinity of correctional camps, the few non-Indian males attending are therefore nearly without exception prisoners on leave for that evening. Guests, non-Indians and Indians alike, are always welcome in an Indian A.A. group and are often encouraged to come.

Summary: Attendance at non-Indian and Indian A.A. meetings.

Non-Indian A.A.

Mostly long term male alcoholics in their late 30's or older. Few, if any, women.

Ratio of men to women approx. 7:1.

Non-alcoholic relatives or friends very rarely seen.

Guest speakers occasionally invited.

Few, if any, prisoners even at A.A. meetings in localities close to prison camps.

Indian A.A.

Mostly young men and women with alcohol problems in the age group of 20 to 40 years.

Ratio of men to women approx. 1:1.

Many non-alcoholic relatives and friends present.

Guests welcome.

Few non-Indians, most of them prisoners on leave at Indian A.A. meetings located close to prison camps.

Content of A.A. Speeches

The strength of A.A. lies in the group support it renders and in the fact that the alcoholics themselves contribute through their speeches. A newcomer is never told that he might be an alcoholic, or what will be expected of him as a member. The problems created in a person's life by alcohol abuse do not vary greatly from one drinker to the other. Listening to their speeches, the newcomer will soon identify with the members. Forgetting his defiance and resistance and hearing about the disastrous effects alcohol has had in other people's lives, he cannot help drawing his own conclusion: "It is as if the speaker talks about me, these are my problems too, that's exactly what happened to me, if he says he is an alcoholic, I must be one too." This shocking experience during the first contact very often discourages the newcomer from attending further A.A. meetings for a while. He might even increase his drinking "just to show them that I am not an alcoholic". But, as many A.A. members later confess, indulgence is never again the same. A "softening-up stage", as A.A. calls it, has begun and the drinker is heading for a crisis. Sooner or later, most drinkers who have gone to an A.A. meeting once, will return for a second time. Some, of course, never come back, but many only need a few exposures to A.A. before they are ready to join, although they may need an A.A. friend to take them along. Few are those who will not sooner or later yield to the spirit of A.A. and resist the urge to stand up and confess: "My

name is N. and I am an alcoholic". The novice is then made familiar with the teachings of A.A., the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions (vide appendix), and encouraged to tell the other members of his own history of sufferings. The experience of having a sympathetically listening audience, of being accepted and offered help in spite of revealing one's weaknesses and faults, has a profound healing effect upon the alcoholic. It helps the alcoholic to overcome the loneliness and inferiority feeling which accompanies his drinking life. Since the speeches are personal confessions, they vary with the speaker's experience and his religious and social background. An observer listening to speeches in general A.A. as well as in Indian A.A. groups, is able to distinguish certain characteristic features of Indian speeches as compared to those of non-Indians.

Non-Indian A.A. members have a tendency to keep their presentations impersonal and to handle problems theoretically. The level of sophistication, of course, varies with the speaker's education, but expressions such as "ego strength", "neurotic patterns", "my super-ego", and other psychological terms are popular and often used to explain misconduct or to excuse relapses into drinking. Another tendency of non-Indians, in order to avoid "getting too serious", is to talk in grim humour about their own shortcomings. When mentioning God, this is often done ironically, such as by calling him the "big boss upstairs", or in the form of superficial jokes like this:

"I used to get really drunk, so bad I could not stand any more. I did not want A.A. But now I enjoy staying sober. Now every morning when I wake up I say 'Good morning God' -- but when I was still drinking it was: 'Good God, morning!'"

Non-Indian speakers strive to entertain; their speeches are often spiced with hilarious wit. Comments from the audience are quick to follow and volleys of laughter may be heard. Once gaiety has taken hold of the audience, it is difficult to call the meeting to order again. Feelings of gratitude towards A.A. and certain A.A. members may be expressed, but this is also often done in the form of jokes; e.g.:

"My sponsor used to be Father McKennan and each time I had been drunk I would say, 'Oh Father forgive me'. I used to call him 'Father Forgiv'im', because he always said, 'Well, I'll forgive him'".

Some White members admitted they are keeping up the same hilarious mood they found in the pubs before: "I like A.A. because we can laugh together. Just be happy together and still be sober". If Indians are present at a general A.A. meeting, non-Indian speakers may refer to them as "our Indian friends", but will never elaborate on the Indian-White relationship as this is hardly of any concern to them. This is in sharp contrast to Indian A.A. speakers. They betray a strong preoccupation with non-Indian A.A. members and with the Indian-White relationship in general; when speaking at non-Indian A.A. meetings as well as in their own groups. This preoccupation may be revealed merely in short remarks:

"My great White father helped me stay sober."

"I first hated the White people in A.A., but they put up with me in spite of our backward ways."

"She was a Whitewoman, but she was as much a sister as the Indian people to me."

"I hated that A.A. group because I never saw an Indian around."

"There is an old saying. 'The Indians never win! We'll take a good look; here is one Indian that never won. But I slowly learnt to stick with the winners.'"

In many Indian speeches the theme of Indian feelings towards White society is paramount. The following passages from Indian speeches demonstrate the speakers' adroitness at self-scrutiny. Instead of only blaming the White man the Indians also look into their own problems with Western society. An Indian woman pleaded:

"I know there are also White people in the audience, but please do not discriminate against them. I hated the A.A. because I saw so few Indians there. My heart bleeds for them. But somehow we are extremely difficult to reach. I do not know what it is about us. Maybe we feel we have been discriminated against, it's all in our minds."

A male Indian alcoholic expressed the same insight:

"I hated all the White men except for one man because he never turned me down. I thank God and this White man for my sobriety. If it was not for him and the A.A. I would probably sit down in some dark alley, full of booze and self-pity, and blame the damned world and the White man for bending my arm. I did not want to go to the White alcoholics for help, because I did not want to degrade myself to their level. I hated myself and used the White man for an excuse."

Some Indians display ambivalent feelings towards White and Indian society:

"I made a real mess out of my life. I was more Indian than the Indians themselves. But my White man husband could not tolerate my drinking. He kicked me out of his house with the words, 'You are not fit for a human being to live with.'"

Why don't you go back to the Indians, maybe they can help you.' But I said: 'Who made me drink? I will not go back to the Indians now, because they would not want me even on a silver platter'."

One Indian woman even ventured to make a joke out of her misery:

"I took my last drink in May 1967. Canada was 100 years old, and I like to think that was my centennial project."

But then she continued full of anger:

"A hundred years of what? They took my country away from me, and look what happened to me. I was a chief's daughter ...and look at me now, nothing but a no-good drunken slut! Who wants me now?"

Indian women usually display a milder attitude towards non-Indians than do Indian men. They stress the virtue of being humble; of being able to understand and forgive instead of showing hate ("To me one of the most dreadful diseases of humanity is hatred towards self and others"). Their A.A. speeches reflect character traits and behaviour patterns highly valued in women in traditional Indian culture:

"It was A.A. that made me talk and helped me to take care of my family. I have learnt many things in A.A. I have learnt to respect my husband. I have learnt that he is the boss -- not me. I must obey. I was taught to obey my superior, obey anyone that is ahead of you, even if they are wrong...it's obedience that counts in your life. I used to say to my husband 'I hate you, you old bugger!' -- now A.A. made me say -- 'Come on, Darling'. This is a big change in me."

A timid Indian girl in her "sobering-up phase" in A.A., was incapable of giving a talk. She would stand in front of the audience, shivering and mumbling, then return to her seat with tears in her eyes.

Two years later she was able to speak at Indian A.A. meetings, but still said very little in non-Indian A.A. groups. As could be gathered from her statements, she had come to the conclusion that extreme passivity and inability to speak up for herself, were the main reasons for her alcohol abuse:

"I can't see my way to fight. I get hurt but I can't fight. I am not a person to express myself. I am that sort of a person that cannot get angry. I could not make conversation without booze, because I was ashamed to admit that I was an Indian. A.A. has taught me to get rid of my Indian ways. I have been in A.A. for two years and I think I am beginning to become civilized."

In another speech she talked more about the "Indian feeling":

"We have felt discrimination for a long, long time. That's why we close our minds to all what these people (in A.A.) try to do for us. It is pretty hard for my people to follow the program. It's hard to get them out of their shell. Once in a while we slide back into that old feeling. I think I'll use that word 'Indian feeling', you know. It's that feeling... getting back into that shell, it's kind of hard to get out. It's very sad."

Steps 4 to 9 in the "Ladder of Complete Sobriety" of A.A. encourage the member to take "personal inventory", and call for a fearless review of his wrongs towards others. Indian women are usually quite ready to take these steps, and their speeches often take on the flavour of self-accusation:-

"The degradation a woman goes through (when alcoholic) is very pitiful. The White men abuse Indian women when they are drinking, more than Indians would abuse White women. I have done a lot of bad things to the White man, too. We used to get the White men down to the reserve and then we would chase them away and take their beer. I did a lot of things that was hard on the family. I neglected my children and my grandchildren were ashamed of their grandmother."

Indian men also blame themselves in their A.A. speeches, but by exaggerating their own badness they turn self-accusation into bragging:

"I was in all prisons from Canada to Seattle. If I should tell you my whole drinking story it would take me the whole night. I was a wife-beater, a liar, a thief, a cheat; you name it, I was it."

Another Indian man refers to his past in these terms:

"I used to be real bad when I drank. Fighting with the wife, breaking into homes, scaring the daylight out of people. Going to jail all the time and fines and fines and fines. I missed 13 years in jail and I think I put in less than I deserved."

One way of indirect boasting by an elderly Indian man, was to name the professionals and institutions with futile involvement in his sobering-up process over the years:

"That was poor old me, you know. The house burned down, I lost my wife through booze. I was two years on skid-row, several times in the bucket, in Oakalla, in Chilliwack camps. I am trying to find a camp where I have not been yet. I always did everything the hard way; hard work, hard drinking. I was torturing myself mentally. I went through a mental institution; the doctors thought I would lose my mind completely. But I still have a little brain left, just enough to stay sober in A.A. Any man who has been through all these institutions and jails learns something. It might be hard, but it is useful."

Sometimes Indian men brag about their drinking life in a colorful and amusing fashion:

"I went through 18 years of hell. I am sure I know every door and gate down at skid-row. I know what it is like to stand in the soup-line, I know what it is like to sleep on the dry dock or to go down and look for an empty box-car to sleep in. I once fell asleep in a box-car in Vancouver and sobered up in Kamloops. I sure made big eyes when I looked out. That was quite an experience."

Listening to Indian men speaking in A.A. lets one think of them as great "alcohol heroes", instead of picturing them as the great

warriors they were in former days, when their own culture provided them with adequate outlets for aggressive and adventurous impulses. When joining A.A., Indian men have to give up their alcoholic feats. They have to make great efforts to turn aggression and hate into charity and love. The alcoholic Indian thus becomes extremely dependent upon the A.A. group and its support. In fact Indian, much more than non-Indian A.A. members, constantly assure each other of their love, and tell everybody of their thankful appreciation for the help they receive in A.A. It is a custom in A.A. to begin speeches by saying, "My name is N., I am an alcoholic". Indians often begin with: "My name is N., and I am a very grateful alcoholic". Their dependency upon the group, and on the feelings of love and gratitude, is expressed by Indian A.A. members:

"The love I needed, I found it here in A.A."

"I need you here. I need you now, every day of my life I need you people in A.A. Show me, tell me, watch me."

"Here in A.A. we really learn what it means to live together. The love and compassion is beyond any description in the English language as far as I am concerned."

"Deep down in my heart I have so little. I do know this, that the little bit I have is this wonderful fellowship in A.A. I love you all and I want you. The fellowship is all I want. You must allow me to love you in order for me to stay sober, one day at a time."

Young Indian men are not always able to love away their aggression. After times of abstinence and eager participation in A.A., they become restless and unable to "stay on the program". Periods of excessive drinking and exceptionally aggressive outbursts then follow. A young Indian privately excused his "falling off the wagon" thus:

"I really am somebody when drunk. I can pick a fight with any strong guy without being scared. Many times I have landed in prison for manhandling. There have been times when I nearly killed a man in drunken fights. I am known and feared all over the place when drinking. Now, nobody knows about me when I'm sober."

This man speaking in A.A. during times of abstinence sounds quite differently:

"I owe my sobriety to you people each time I have it. There is no way I can thank you, no way I can pay you back. No matter how much money you have, you can't buy this. When I need you, I need you all the time. If I don't go and get you, I might just as well go to a beer parlor. I come here for myself. I have not drunk for five months. These have been the five happiest months of my life. To come here, to see you all, happy, smiling and not sick."

A placid Indian man who has been fighting liquor successfully for years, refers in A.A. speeches to his feelings of aggression as "garbage". He is able to get rid of his hostility towards A.A. in his own way:

"There are times when you can go and go until you run out of gas yourself, and then you have to go back to A.A. and get refuelled, you know. All this garbage I have got in here, you guys can have it! I'll leave it with you so you can think about it, so I'll not have to carry it along. This is what A.A. is; kind of like a garbage disposal, for me anyhow. It seems that this garbage collects and collects and collects, and then that stinking thinking comes back, you know. Me, ugly me starts coming out, that Jekyll and that Hyde, as they say. I dump the garbage right here. You can do with it whatever you want!"

Summary: Content of Speeches in A.A.

Non-Indians

Tendency to be general instead of personal. Frequent use of psychological terms.

Indians

Personal speeches, mostly in simple terms.

Non-Indians

Strong emotions rarely displayed. God often referred to in half-joking manner.

Hilarious gaiety and camaraderie. Former drinking buddies get together, drinking coffee instead of alcohol.

Sometimes confession-type speeches, but rarely with self-accusations.

Indian-White relationship hardly ever mentioned.

Indians

Strong emotions often shown. No jokes about God.

Love and gratitude towards A.A. members expressed.

Confession-type speeches the rule. Self-accusation often turned into bragging (Indian men).

Indian-White relationship in foreground of concern.

CHAPTER III

CULTURE CONFLICT AND ALCOHOL ABUSE

Alcohol and the Indian-White Relationship

When Simon Fraser descended the river which bears his name, in 1808, he was the first White man ever seen by the Indians along the river banks. During the first years of sporadic White-Indian contact, White men were appreciated because of the wonderful new tools and other utensils they traded. They were often received with courtesy and hospitality:

"These Indians showed us every possible mark of kindness; having taken up our quarters with them for the night, they gave us plenty to eat and entertained us with a variety of songs, dances, etc. during the evening." (Simon Fraser 1808, p. 210)

But the good relationship deteriorated as soon as White settlers encroached upon Indian lands in increasing numbers. Settlement and especially the onslaught of thousands of unscrupulous gold seekers who flooded the Fraser Valley after the middle of the 19th century, threatened the Indians' existence. Any attempt to resist the strangers was hampered by the Indians' confusion and bewilderment as to how to handle the intruders and by the rapid decline of the Indian population. The remaining Indians realized that they could not fight the ever-increasing number of settlers. The Coast Salish Indians were not given the opportunity to withdraw on large reserves like many other Indian groups in Canada. Their reserves were small but numerous and scattered among the White population. They have ever since had to live in close

proximity to the White man, and the relationship between the two has been -- and still is -- complex and difficult. Confusion about the differences between traditional native and modern "Christian" ethics and beliefs is still felt, and the high loss of Indian lives through smallpox and other epidemics is still believed to be due to the evil doings of Whites who wished to see the Red man perish.¹ The Indians' attitude towards the Whites remains therefore colored by suspicion, distrust, fear and bitterness. But since the Indian people for two generations have been unable to exist without the cooperation and help of Western man, they have tried to forget these negative feelings and striven to obtain the friendship of their new neighbours.

Alcohol has played a decisive role in these efforts, as the liquor used and offered by the White man became a symbol of friendship and equality to the Indians. Identification with Whites can easily be observed in Indian drinking, as it became symbolic of attaining White status and prerogatives (Honigmann 1944). The taking and giving of alcohol represented to the Indian his acceptance in a White environment which barred him from most other forms of social contact (Lemert 1954; Robertson 1970). The White labourers, loggers and fishermen living and working among the Coast Salish Indians, set the pattern of heavy rapid

1. "The most terrible single calamity to befall the Indians of British Columbia was the smallpox epidemic which started in Victoria in 1862 ...and within two years it had reached practically all parts of the province and killed about one-third of the native people....Smallpox was not the only disease that cut deeply into the Indian population. Epidemics of measles, influenza, tuberculosis and others took their heavy tolls." (Duff 1964; pp. 42-43)

drinking, drinking for the purpose of becoming drunk (Hawthorn 1960; Lemert 1958; Buckley 1968). Alcohol facilitated communication between Indians and Whites. It worked both ways:

"Once long ago, I got drunk with an Indian....It's an awful proposition, but that might have been the most real thing I've ever done with an Indian." (Fry 1970, p. 145)

Drinking alcohol thus facilitates communication between the partners; White and Indian feel they are on equal footing when becoming drunk together. Hostility, which Indians harbour towards Whites but which they rarely show towards them when sober, comes out half-jokingly when both meet over a glass of liquor. Even fighting with words or fists is then possible without ruining the newly established friendship. Thus alcohol is used to "bribe the transition from a hostile role to that of a friend" (Szwed 1966). To the dismay of the Indian, alcohol turned out to be a dubious helper. While taking him closer to the Whites, liquor soon led to unhappiness in his own family and to the disruption of friendship ties with his kin. Before long the Indian found himself in trouble with alcohol. He saw his money disappear, his family break up, his ethical standards lowered and himself jailed and despised by the very people whose recognition he wanted to win. Naturally, he came to see the evils of liquor as an additional calamity brought upon him by the White man (Lemert 1954; Dailey 1968), and this reinforced his old suspicion that the White man was out to destroy him -- now with alcohol! It is a common belief among Coast Salish Indians even today, that R.C.M.P. officers enrich themselves through fines collected from drunken Indians.

Some older Indians in this area go so far in their suspicious attitude as to believe that alcohol sold to Indians is in some way poisoned, and to them this explains why the Indians become more quickly addicted and more disturbed than non-Indians. That such a belief, as absurd as it might sound today, has its roots in historical facts is accounted for in stories of the frontier days. The so-called "Indian whiskey" of the past has been described as a vile potion that was drugged and diluted with water before it was handed to the Indians:

"Solutions of camphor and tobacco with a little whiskey flavoring quite often were sold as liquor. Mixtures containing bluestone vitriol, a copper compound, and nitric acid.... Vanilla extract and Jamaica ginger, as well as Florida water and cologne, proved highly popular drinks with natives in some areas (around Victoria during the Gold Rush of 1858-1864)The frequency of death and the great disorganization of behaviour caused by drinking also is understandable in the light of the highly toxic and poisonous qualities of the beverages the Indians drank with gusto." (Lemert 1954, p. 307)

This indicates how unscrupulous White traders were in the
2
choice of their means of cheating Indians, and the memory of this must have been kept alive among Coast Salish Indians to account for their suspicion even towards the liquor bought at government stores.

How intimately Indian alcohol abuse is related to the Indian-White relationship, is usually not revealed to the non-Indian investigator. When directly asked, "Why do you drink?" most Indians will give

2. Cheating Indians by selling them toxic liquors was a going joke in the days of the Old West: "You take one barrel of Missouri River water, and two gallons of alcohol. Then you add two ounces of strychnine...and three plugs of tobacco to make them sick...and five bars of soap to give it a bead, and half a pound of red pepper, and then you put in some sagebrush and boil it until it's brown." (Abbott, cit. Winkler 1968, p. 430)

insignificant answers like: "I don't know"; "Because I like it"; or, "How can I tell you when I don't know it myself?". These are essentially avoidance responses masking the strong emotions stirred up by such questions. Most Indians for many reasons do not want to reveal the negative feelings provoked by such inquiries. By giving non-informative answers they are able to keep up a friendly attitude towards the non-Indian questioner.

In a psychotherapeutic setting, however, when an Indian patient comes for help regarding his alcohol-connected disturbances, the situation is different. If the therapist maintains total acceptance of, and empathy with, his Indian patient, the latter will forget his usual concern about making a good impression upon his White counterpart and reveal his core complex, i.e. the cluster of socio-cultural ideas charged with strong emotions resulting from the Indian-White conflict; hostility towards the Whites who are looked upon as oppressors; anger about perceived discriminations; frustration because of identity conflicts; shame over the moral confusion and material poverty of the Indian people; despair over the destructive effects of the "White man's firewater", and grief because of the disappearance of "Indian ways" and Indian languages. Inquiry into the reasons for drinking touches upon the core complex and this at

3. Core complex, as defined above, is the author's concept. The term complex was taken from C.G. Jung who introduced it to designate "groups of feeling-toned ideas in the unconscious" (Jung 1906). The presence of a complex points to something "unfinished", to weak spots in the personality. According to Jung, complexes originate in traumatic experiences, emotional shocks and unresolved conflicts in the individual's remote or recent past, by which a fragment of the psyche is split-off or incapsulated (Jacobi 1968; p. 38).

first causes a reaction of anger and defeat which then gives way to the expression of shame and depression. One old Salish Indian with a life-long history of alcoholic problems put it this way:

"Well, first they really put the fear of the Lord in them, the priests that came west. They were real strict. It was the Devil, the practice of Indian dancing. As punishment it was Hell. The Indians believed them and were terrified about Hell and all that. With this kind of strain there was a split. Some became enfranchised. That's a big thing. Enfranchisement is just a name for surrender, all hope of living as an Indian was gone and the man that surrendered lost his pride. Others withdrew on the reserves. No work on the reserves, drifting down to town. Disappointments down there. White man offered drink. Old alcohol says 'You'll be alright. You come with me I'll fix you up.' Bitterness against the White man and what he has done to us, hatred and defeat, that's what makes the Indian drink. Even today the White man will come to the river when we fish and offer us 2 or 3 bottles of whiskey for our salmon. Whiskey makes the poor man feel rich, the old feel young, so we smile and take the whiskey with hate in our heart, and give him the salmon."

As we have demonstrated, Indian use and misuse of alcohol is closely related to the interaction between Indians and Whites. In order to solve his alcohol problem, the Indian has to resolve his core complex; be it through a new effort to gain the friendship of non-Indians and to forget the past; or by rejecting White culture in a constructive attempt to find a separate Indian identity. Alcoholics Anonymous has become a forum for this struggle.

Alcoholics Anonymous and the Indian-White Relationship

Indians with alcohol problems turning to churches, hospitals, clinics and other Western institutions are often disenchanted, not only because of the paternalistic attitudes they encounter, but also because

the atmosphere in these institutions is foreign to them. The Coast Salish Indians, with their cultural bias against authority ("I don't want to be pushed around" -- "Nobody has the right to tell me what to do") found in Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) an attitude which they could accept better. "The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.... Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern" (from the Twelve Traditions of A.A.). One's socio-cultural or racial background is supposed to be irrelevant in this organization. In A.A. the Indian meets non-Indians, who like him, have been unhappy, impoverished, lonely, mentally and physically impaired because of the common enemy, alcohol. Here he sees a chance to re-establish friendship on a more equal basis. This time the relationship takes on a different character as alcohol is only indirectly involved. An ex-alcoholic Indian woman expressed it this way:

"When you go through that door (to the A.A. meeting) you're not an Indian or a White man, you're just a person. 'You're a drunken Indian so we don't want to have anything to do with you' the White man says, but it is not that way in A.A. It takes a long time until an Indian can really trust the White man but in A.A. there are times when he can say -- 'this is really my friend'. We all help each other to stay sober. To me alcoholism is one of the illnesses that can bring people together and people to have compassion. There is something in A.A. that you get after being there...you remember the kind of guy you were before, then you feel that you want to tell the whole damned world about it, not just your people, not just the neighbour, you want to tell everybody and you want to get everybody sober."

The intensive pre-occupation with the Indian-White relationship manifested in the Indians' A.A. speeches (vide supra, pp. 30-38) indicates that they are working towards a conflict solution. Indians even venture to express hostile feelings towards Whites without experi-

encing anxiety, as when an Indian girl shouted "You White buggers got me all drunk, now you can bloody well sober me up A.A.-wise," and reaped hearty laughter from the non-Indian members.

When interviewed regarding their motivation for joining A.A., many Indians stress that they like the personal freedom and the feeling of being their own master there. They highly appreciate the fact that anybody can be chosen to chair a meeting, which to them indicates that they count just as much as the non-Indians. Here are some typical comments:

"In A.A. there is no must."

"If you become the chairman you can make the meeting like you want it."

"Anybody can come in and sit down."

"If you want to express yourself you are free to give a speech; if you prefer to keep quiet nobody will bother you."

That acceptance by Whites is an important motive for many Indians who join A.A., can be seen from the following answers:

"The White people also have (alcoholic) problems. A.A. helps them to understand us better."

"In a lot of A.A. places I went to, White people are friendly with Indians; not all of them but lots, it works both ways."

"When I came to A.A. they told me that I was equal to them and they treated me so good."

Why then have numerous Coast Salish Indians chosen to form separate Indian A.A. groups, and why did that result in a sharp increase in Indian A.A. attendance?

For reasons already mentioned, Indians with serious drinking problems come to A.A. meetings filled with resentment against the White man. However, without the disinhibiting effect of liquor, they remain timid and quiet in the meetings. White alcoholics coming to A.A. are, as a rule, completely unaware of the Indians' feelings, and do not display any special interest in the Indians present. Indian participants are mostly too inhibited to initiate contact; they are therefore, easily overlooked by the others, which is readily interpreted by the oversensitive Indians as dislike or discrimination. Actually there is a certain amount of discrimination against Indians even in A.A. in spite of this organization's stress upon equality "regardless of race and creed", and this can easily be elicited in interviews with non-Indian A.A. members. There is the stereotyped belief by non-Indian members that Indians have a harder time attaining sobriety because they are "more irresponsible"; "weaker" and "less able to fight" than other members. Grumbled a senior A.A. member: "In my humble opinion anybody who undertakes to sober up a bunch of Indians have got an almost impossible job on their hands." Typical of prejudice in general were the angry complaints of a White woman: "The Indians hardly ever contribute anything, they don't even bring coffee or sandwiches to the meetings....well, of course the majority of the White members would not eat their foods anyhow, because they are not as clean as they could be." Another objection was that Indians bring their friends to the meetings only for the purpose of giving them a chance to eat some good food: "They'll eat everything regardless whether anybody else gets anything or not. It's a habit they've got and always have had as far as I am concerned."

Some non-Indian members display an ambivalent attitude of tolerance and resentment towards Indian participants: "Well, it's all right to have them in the meeting, but I don't have to live with them." Several Indians bitterly complained that non-Indians do not greet Indian A.A. members outside the meetings, but behave as if they do not know them at all. Such behaviour of White A.A. members is in keeping with their desire to preserve anonymity, for which the Indians have very little understanding.

Generally speaking, most White A.A. members, if at all aware of having Indians among them, are tolerant and friendly inclined, showing great willingness to help the Indian alcoholics in their struggle for sobriety. A high proportion of Indians have non-Indian A.A. sponsors. Many of the difficulties encountered between Indians and Whites in A.A. are due to thoughtlessness on the part of the non-Indians, and to hypersensitivity on the part of the Indians. Any disparaging remark from a non-Indian A.A. member, hardly noticed by anybody else, might suffice to shatter the good will and confidence the Indian has built up. An impressive example was an elderly Indian woman who confessed with tears in her eyes:

"A White guy called us (Indians) 'bloodsuckers' because we always are asking for car rides to the meetings. It affected me so much, the feeling I had of hatred, my thinking went right back to the old Indian way because the White man has caused us so much trouble, spoiled everything for us.... I have still got my old ways and my temper and my hang-ups about the old days and how we were treated. I don't know whether I'll ever get over it...it took me 8 years to come out of it in A.A. and it took just one White man to take me back again just where I started."

An Indian man who had joined the general A.A. several years ago and who has many friends among non-Indian members, gave the following incident as a reason for the formation of a separate Indian A.A. group:

"When A.A. started, it was very good. But now all went wrong. I think it was an Indian-White split. One White man said to an Indian woman, 'There are several reasons why you'll never make it: you are lazy, you have no consistency, and you are an Indian.' It was said as a joke, but he had no right to give her points like that."

So far we have quoted some of the reasons usually given for the split in A.A. There are other forces at work, which one can observe as an outsider, but of which few of the A.A. members are aware.

In Western society, male alcoholics are far better tolerated than female alcoholics. Women who in spite of strong social sanctions become alcoholics are usually emotionally or mentally disturbed and are, as a rule, channelled to other treatment resources at an early date. In general A.A. meetings, men therefore, far outnumber women. It is rare to see more than two or three women in a meeting with twenty or more men.

In Coast Salish Indian culture far less stigma is attached to being drunk, even in the case of women, and it is quite usual that both men and women indulge in heavy drinking. Obviously it is more disruptive for a family when the mother drinks and neglects her children, who might be removed by social agencies. Indian women with alcohol problems are therefore in general more eager to seek help than are men. As a result, when Indians attend general A.A. meetings, there is an influx of women

into a prevalent White male milieu. Whereas Indian males tend to be overlooked in general A.A. meetings, this is not so with Indian women. The old pattern of White men seducing Indian women with the help of alcohol is difficult to break for both partners, even when alcohol is only talked about instead of being consumed. One can observe Indian men having a hard time to display "brotherly love" for their non-Indian A.A. rivals, and it is therefore not surprising that it is mainly Indian men who propagate separate Indian A.A. groups. Most of them want the meetings to be held on the reserves, probably in part to keep their women away from former White drinking buddies. Indian women more often prefer mixed groups, or are at least more tolerant towards Whites. However, some of them admitted to difficulties in coping with White male members:

"Some White guys get ideas in A.A. They don't understand that it is different; that in A.A. we are supposed to have a clean innocent love for each other."

"I love him A.A.-wise, not otherwise."

"It's hard to keep an A.A. relationship with them."

Since it is incompatible with general A.A. policy to divide groups along racial lines, the Indians had to find plausible reasons for the formation of Indian A.A. groups. They will, e.g., rationalize the move by stating that it is more "convenient" and that they get more Indians to attend meetings located on the reserves. This is only partly true, since the reserves are small and widely scattered, and most Indians have to travel far to attend meetings on other reserves. More commonly the blame is put on the non-Indians by criticizing the atmosphere in general A.A. meetings:

"The White A.A. group is very proud, they don't want us there."

"It's too big, a snobbish big group of Whites."

"White groups are too social, it's like a social club, too much joking, especially about Indians and about God."

"I sat for four years in A.A. feeling that these White people didn't want me, so I said to myself, I am not going there any more."

Then perceived discrimination is turned into voluntary segregation:

"Lots of people, especially Indians, don't want to go up there and talk about themselves and tell all people what he did and what he did not do. Most Indians are reluctant to express their innermost feelings when there are White people present."

"It's not so warm in the White A.A. The feeling of belonging is not so strong as in our group."

"We had to be really careful with anonymity there. More strict than in our group. Indians don't care for that, we like to have our children there and lots of friends."

Summary: The dialectic process of Indian-White interactions in the context of drinking.

Phase one:

acceptance of alcohol

Alcohol used initially to facilitate Indian-White interaction. Friendship based on common enjoyment of liquor.

Phase two:

abuse of alcohol

Alcohol used to alleviate the anxiety and frustration generated in Indian-White interaction. Resulting poverty and misery leads to rejection of the "drunken Indian" by Whites. Resentment instead of friendship.

Phase three:

rejection of alcohol

Alcohol again the context of Indian-White interaction in Alcoholics Anonymous. Renewal of friendship on the basis of common struggle against liquor.

Phase four:

abstinence from alcohol

Solving of problems regarding Indian-White interaction

- a) acceptance of the White man by the Indian; attempt at integration -- mixed A.A. groups;
- b) rejection of the White man by the Indian; emphasis on Indian identity -- Indian A.A. groups.

Is the Indian A.A. Developing Into a Nativistic Movement?

We have seen how turning for help to A.A. has given Indians with alcohol problems an opportunity to probe into their relationship with the White man and to gain more knowledge about non-Indians and about alcoholism in general. For many Indians the better understanding of their own and other A.A. members' problems has made them more tolerant of others and has enabled them to entertain good relationships also with non-Indian members. But many Indians have felt the conflict deepen through the close contact with Whites in the general A.A. and have chosen the alternative approach for solving their problems, reacting to their own feelings of being disliked and discriminated against, by a voluntary return into isolation; hence the forming of separate Indian A.A. groups. According to Schwimmer (1970), minority groups have a tendency to withdraw from the majority group if the latter is perceived as unfair or threatening. This does not necessarily mean that the minority group remains in apathy, rather it is "an attempt by the withdrawing group to resolve internal contradictions arising out of external impact." Schwimmer's hypothesis applied to our example suggests that although the Indians avoid direct

confrontation with the majority group in A.A. by forming their own A.A., they are still dealing with the internal conflicts arising from the external impact of Western society, i.e. with their bitterness, inferiority feelings and resentments, and their hate for the White man. Our observations tend to confirm this. Preoccupation with Indian-White relationships does not in the least diminish as one could have expected, but is rather intensified in Indian A.A. meetings. Open discussion of these conflicts is facilitated by the fact that the Indians are among themselves. Not having to be afraid of offending anybody, they can air criticism of Whites and compare their own virtues with the others' faults. This attempt at self-healing leads the Indians to look for something within themselves, which is better than they can get from non-Indian A.A.: they turn to their elders and to their half-forgotten culture for new resources. What Schwimmer calls symbolic competition is now coming into play:

"Certainly, the key to the understanding of ethnic minorities is the history of oppression and exploitation they have experienced at the hands of the dominant group...theorists have been inclined to under-estimate the richness of the symbolic edifices that oppressed peoples build out of the facts of their oppression...the symbolic systems that thus emerge ...are opposition ideologies...the principal characteristic of these ideologies is that they contain the idealised image of a culture." (Schwimmer 1970, p. 5)

What on the surface might look like the traditional system with its rituals and beliefs is, according to Schwimmer, in reality an opposition ideology. It is aimed directly at competition with the White man on economic or political grounds, or purely on a symbolic level which

leaves the actual power relationship unchanged, but which gives the oppressed people a belief in their own superiority. An abstract of some pamphlets which a group of active Indian A.A. members wrote for distribution in A.A. meetings will illustrate the applicability of Schwimmer's theory to processes going on in Coast Salish Indian A.A. groups:

"Indian culture is one of Spiritual living in harmony with Nature, a way of life with respect and concern, giving and sharing....We are a mystical people, believing in equality, living for the present with patience and silence (non-aggressiveness to our White brother with no apparent awareness of time). The Indian culture provided consistency in love and understanding with honesty. Yes, the Indian lived with individual identity with a feeling of worth which gave him pride....The land is called 'Mother Earth', the sun is called the 'Father' and the moon our 'Sister', while the rivers and ocean are our witnesses. We believe that water, forest, land and all creatures belong to all, and that they were given as a gift from the Great Spirit as a way of life to live...."

To these alleged Indian values the same authors see the "White values" as diametrically opposed:

"The White man...came looking for religious freedom, yet converting others to his particular religion which seems but a segment of his life. He came with a spirit of competitiveness and a concern for self, saving, acquiring and impatient for wealth, noisy and aggressive....We see you as greedy, destroying nature, such as land, water and forests and yet attempting to acquire them as your private domain. We see you as people with their eyes in the future, speeding toward space living and so aware of time that you are missing the beauty of the present.

In your inconsistency of love and understanding, and by your dishonesty in not giving the Indian equal opportunity for education or employment without prejudice, you have created mistrust. We have lived in your world of dominance and paternalism and have reaped a harvest, created and perpetuated by you, of a poor self-image of ourselves." ⁴

4. Quoted by permission of Mrs. Willafred Washington, Lummi Tribal Alcoholism Program 1970.

The value system of the majority group is no longer accepted but presented as something bad per se, in a binary opposition to the values of Indian culture which now are perceived as good per se.

Criticism of non-Indians and their A.A. groups in contrast to Indians and their way of conducting A.A. meetings is reflected in many answers given to the question of why separate Indian groups are preferred:

"When the Indian speaks it is the truth and very humble. The non-Indians will tell you what they think, but they do not tell you what they feel."

"Our people in our culture have expressions of love and concern for each other. We love and need each other in A.A. In the White A.A. they are more concerned about anonymity. They're not very honest."

"The White A.A. is cold, they use too big words."

Indians who frequent general A.A. meetings and make friends among non-Indian A.A. members, experience considerable stress when mixing with fellow Indians who are still drinking. When refusing to give or take a drink, they are accused of "acting like a White man", of "thinking they are better than we are". It is difficult enough for Indians to accept the teaching of A.A. which is based on concepts of White middle class culture, representing the very value system they criticize or reject. The Indians who want to be successful in their fight against alcohol through A.A. must find ways out of this unpleasant dilemma. One way is to assure each other that the philosophy of A.A. originated in Indian culture rather than in Western civilization. As one ardent advocate of separate Indian A.A. put it:

"The fellowship of A.A. was here long before the White man came along, because we had this fellowship. We had this Indian healing and we firmly agree that it works. It works as well as A.A."

Another Indian stated bluntly "the A.A. way of life is the Indian way of life", and in the pamphlet of the Lummi Tribal Alcoholism Program we read:

"Alcoholics Anonymous as group therapy provides the needs or basic principles of Indian culture....In this type of group therapy he (the Indian) finds himself and begins to grow with a better image of self and finds a way of life as it was taught to him in the Lummi Indian Culture....The basic principles of Alcoholics Anonymous are those same basic principles taught by the Lummi Indian Culture."

The desire to find links between the teaching of A.A. and old Indian culture runs like a red thread through Indian A.A. The recent emphasis on Indianness explains many peculiar features of Indian A.A. meetings. Viewing Indian A.A. in this light, we realize how important it is to the Indians to stress differences rather than to adjust their way of conducting meetings to that of the general A.A. One of the reasons for the Indians' objection to anonymity is their desire to keep the meetings open for anybody to attend, as was the custom when Coast Salish Indians had gatherings in the past. Whereas non-alcoholics attending a general A.A. meeting are usually ignored, they will be treated as honoured guests in an Indian A.A. meeting, as they would have been at a potlatch in former days. Sometimes during the meeting one of the members who knows the guest, will ask him to stand up for everybody to "witness" his presence and will say a few friendly words of introduction. The group responds with handclapping and friendly smiles. The Indian group will see to it that

all guests are greeted this way, even if this takes up considerable time.

To encourage members in their struggle against alcoholism, it is customary in A.A. to have a small celebration each time a member has an anniversary of sobriety. The celebrated member is praised for his abstinence and presented with a cake which is then eaten during coffee break.

In the Indian A.A. an anniversary is a big event. All relatives, members and non-members alike will try to show up, bringing with them cakes and other foods. One of the A.A. members will give a long speech in his honour and during coffee break the relatives will take great care in cutting the cake and distributing it among the guests. At one occasion an Indian father distributed cigars to all men and cookies to all women present, publicly announcing the birth of a son (an interesting mixture of Western and Indian culture elements).

Feasting sometimes continues at a member's home after the A.A. meeting is closed. Indians may refer to such A.A. celebration as "a big do", or a "potlatch".

If the group is small, an Indian A.A. meeting sometimes takes on the character of a family court, where members with grudges "shame" each other, or defend themselves in front of the other participants. Said an Indian woman when asked why she had not attended a certain meeting: "I don't like to go to meetings on that reserve, it's always about the N.N. family."

The only requirement for membership in A.A. is a desire to stop drinking. Instead of rules, A.A. has the so-called "Twelve Steps in the Ladder of Complete Sobriety."⁵ The first step is for the alcoholic to admit that he is powerless over alcohol and that, as a result of this, his life has become unmanageable. There are eleven more steps which have to be taken before tackling the last, a "spiritual awakening" enabling the alcoholic to live a life of sobriety. To the Coast Salish Indians this procedure echoes themes of their old culture. The steps are rituals which the A.A. member has to go through in order to change from his miserable drinking self to a completely new person, ready to participate in the "A.A. way of life". This is the theme of initiation which we find in the Coast Salish guardian spirit ceremonial where suffering and "death" have to precede the novice's "rebirth" as a completely changed person, now ready to live an "Indian way of life". This myth of death and rebirth is mirrored in many Indian A.A. speeches:

"I was so far down as I think not many people have to go before I joined A.A."

"I was at the end of my rope."

"I was so sick I was nearly dying."

"I felt like I was going to kill myself."

These and similar phrases parallel the "death" of the initiate. There are vivid accounts of the "ordeals" they have to go through before finding a "new life" in A.A., such as illnesses, incarceration or institutionalization. An elderly Indian who had been a heavy drinker but joined A.A. many years ago and then became one of the founders of an Indian A.A. group, remembered his salvation in the framework of this myth. According

5. Vide Appendix.

to hospital records, this man was once admitted because of slight injuries when falling out of bed in a drunken state. He was kept overnight in the hospital, but released the next day after having sobered up since no major pathology was found. In his story he was "deadly ill" when taken to hospital. For four days he could neither eat nor drink (corresponding to the four days fasting period in the spirit ceremonial); he was staying in a bed with curtains all around (corresponding to the smokehouse cubicle); friends from A.A. came to guard him ("baby sitters" in the ceremonial). At first he could only sip milk (initiates are "babies") and his friends took turns in feeding him and talking to him about A.A. (teaching of lore during initiation). When better, he decided to start a new life in A.A. The Indians call their anniversary celebrations in A.A. "birthday parties" and sometimes refer to new members as "babies" and to their sponsors, if these are Indians, as "baby sitters". "I was only 6 months old when we started a group on the reserve", said an Indian girl, indicating that she had been abstinent through A.A. for the last half year.

The second of the twelve steps of A.A. states "We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." When non-Indians are asked what this "Power greater than ourselves" means, they usually reply that it is just a non-denominational expression for God, or they refer to this Power as the group spirit which develops within A.A. (secularization). Indian answers to this question, as well as passages in their speeches, provide further clues as to how far the integration of Coast Salish culture elements and Indian A.A. concepts has progressed.

In Coast Salish culture each person had to acquire his own spirit power. It was conceived as an individual power and surrounded with great secrecy. Indians often refer to the higher Power in the A.A. program as "my higher Power". Whereas the A.A. program speaks about "God as we understand him", Indians usually say, "My higher Power as I understand him". It is perceived as a personal power similar to the spirit power of the Winter ceremonials in their own culture:

"I take my higher Power wherever I go, I don't have to go to A.A. for that. I take him and talk to him when I work."

"I call it my higher Power because you see it the way it comes to you. It's your own Power, you don't have to share it with somebody else."

To many Indians who nominally belong to the Catholic Church, the "Power greater than ourselves" in A.A. has become a syncretization of the Christian God and the Indian spirit power:

"I feel that the spiritual way in A.A. is a good way, because spiritual life is the Power within ourselves. He tells you what to do, your great Power. That's what the Indians believed. Syə'wən⁶ is the great Spirit. Now when we learn in English it is God. So I take it either way, God or my Higher Power, I don't know the difference."

In recent years some Indians with alcohol problems have not only joined A.A., but are also taking active part in the revived Coast Salish Winter dance ceremonials. Among them, the fusion of the Power concepts is complete. A newly initiated Spirit dancer who already had been active in A.A. for years, explained:

"I have my spirit because I have found my spirit through the fellowship of A.A., the spirit as I know him. I had my spirit already when I went in there (winter dance initiation), I already had it in A.A."

6. Syə'wən (Halkomelem dialect, Coast Salish area): Power conferred by the guardian spirit; signified by, and expressed in, the songs and dances of Coast Salish Indian winter spirit dance ceremonial.

When this man was asked who sponsored him in A.A., he answered: "My sponsor is syə'wən. My higher Power gave me my song (for the spirit dance), he is my sponsor throughout the year" (in contrast to the traditional syə'wən power which is only active during winter season).

In the words of an Indian A.A. sponsor who also sponsors spirit dance initiates:

"There is a fellowship in dancing in the same way as in A.A.; it's the same thing. In the dancing they teach you to be compatible with everybody. The Power you get in the dancing is the same higher Power as you have in A.A."

The spirit dances can be viewed as a treatment for alcohol abuse complementary to A.A.: "A.A. is a round the year treatment. Syə'wən is from November to March only", or as a woman dancer jokingly remarked:

"In a sense we have an insurance policy, we have taken out two insurances; the more insurance I have the better I'll be and the longer I'll maintain sobriety. I don't only believe in my syə'wən, I always have the fellowship and my higher Power in A.A."

An old Indian, who in his younger days had a severe alcohol problem, but has been abstinent for many years and is a leading figure both in the Indian A.A. and at Indian ceremonies, expressed this opinion:

"The spirit dancers don't use A.A. as a resource, they can be members of A.A. and of winter dancing at the same time, because both A.A. and spirit dancing is a basic spiritual way of life. Their philosophies are the same, but they do it differently. The philosophy of A.A. is the old Indian way only to a certain extent. Indian dancing is our heritage."

Linton (1943) defines a nativistic movement as "any conscious organized attempt on the part of a society's members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of their culture". The Coast Salish Indians who have started separate Indian A.A. groups are too few in number to be called a nativistic movement.

The fusion of the Indian concept of spirit power with the concept of a Higher Power in A.A. as demonstrated above, is one of the indicators that Indian A.A. may develop into a nativistic movement. According to Aberle (1966), A.A. would be classified as a redemptive movement whose symbolism is syncretistic with some nativistic overtones. It aims at a total change in individuals. In this category are many sectarian movements, aiming at a state of grace. The A.A. members express this ideal change by referring to "being reborn" and "starting a new life". The Coast Salish concept of syə'wən, is a culture element distinctly Indian, and not shared, or even understood, by the non-Indian members. According to Linton such an occurrence is characteristic of nativistic movements:

"Certain current or remembered elements of culture are selected for emphasis and given symbolic value. The more distinctive such elements are with respect to other cultures with which the society is in contact, the greater their potential value as symbols of the society's unique character." (Linton 1943, p. 231)

Reviewing our material, we find the following elements of "nativism" in Indian A.A.:

- 1) the emphasis on death and rebirth in the individual history of A.A. members; patterned after the traditional concepts of initiation into the winter dance ceremonial;

- 2) the emphasis on entering a "new life" in A.A. in contrast to the life outside A.A.;
- 3) the reference to the new members as "babies", to their sponsors as "baby sitters" and their anniversaries as "birthdays", as customary in the Coast Salish winter dance ceremonials;
- 4) the potlatch-type of feasting in Indian A.A. groups;
- 5) the fusion of the universal Christian God and the personal Coast Salish spirit power to "my Higher Power" in A.A.

According to Linton (1943) the phenomena to which the term nativistic is applied, have in common the factors of selection of culture elements and deliberate, conscious efforts to perpetuate such elements, i.e. revivalistic nativism; the forming of separate Indian A.A. groups is an attempt to compensate by psychological means for frustrating experiences and perceived discrimination in the general A.A. Certain elements of traditional Coast Salish culture are revived and become symbols of a Golden Age when Indian society in retrospect appears to have been happy and free. The memory of a great past helps to re-establish and maintain the self-respect of the group members even though they have to accept certain aspects of Western culture which are obviously superior to aboriginal equivalents. This is precisely what the leader of the above mentioned Lummi group expresses: "The White members train us in A.A. and give us knowledge, then we adapt it to our own culture."

The Future of A.A. Among the Coast Salish Indians

From the very first contact with alcohol, Indians have sensed its danger, but their pleading with the Whites not to sell them liquor mostly went unheeded. We therefore know very little about the Indian's own efforts in the fight against alcohol, especially during the period of early White-Indian contact. A passage from Thwaites (1896) "The Jesuit Relations", is of interest, as it reflects feelings regarding alcohol similar to those expressed today by Coast Salish Indians (vide, p. 43):

"...and say to them (the English), that all the allied Savages dwelling on the river Kenebek hate fire-water or brandy...and that if they have any more of it brought hither to sell to the Savages, the latter will believe that the English wish to exterminate them." (Cit. Dailey 1968, p. 53)

The famous pledge by Chief Little Turtle, asking the United States president to guard the Indians against the "fatal poison", alcohol, promoted the introduction of legislation to control liquor traffic with the Indians, which became effective in America in the early 19th century. Some Indian tribes formed councils to decide on penalties for drunkenness, sometimes forcing the drunkards to leave their villages and live in the woods (Dailey 1968), and Shore (1970) informs us that a number of Coast Salish Indian reservations in Washington state still maintain local prohibition laws of their own, either forbidding sale of liquor or imposing control on its distribution.

The ways in which non-Indian institutions, such as religious groups and law-enforcement agencies have influenced Indian drinking, will

be dealt with in the last part of this paper.

Religious sects, growing out of Indian culture and the Indians' own actions against alcohol abuse have been, and still are, more effective than efforts by Western agencies.

Four North American Indian religious movements are here presented as examples of active Indian concern with alcohol and other vices: The Peyote Religion; the New Religion or the Longhouse People; the Ghost Dance or Dreamer Religion, and the Indian Shaker Church.

The Peyote cult differs from the three other movements insofar as it uses a hallucinogenic drug to induce an altered state of consciousness during the ceremony, whereas in the other cults possession states are attained without such device.

The mescaline-containing cactus peyote was one of the magic drugs of pre-Columbian Mexico. It was elevated to the rank of a deity and surrounded with religious and shamanistic ritual much of which is still preserved in the ceremonial of the Mexican Huichol Indians (Benzi 1969). From Mexico peyotism spread to many Indian tribes in North America, finally encompassing an area which extends from Canada's prairie provinces to the Southwestern states, and from the Midwest to the Rockies. Today the peyotist movement is organized in the Native American Church of North America. Aberle (1966) has provided us with a comprehensive analysis of the peyote religion as it is practiced among Navaho Indians. In the context of his classification of social movements, Aberle defines peyotism as a redemptive movement with syncretistic Christian, nativistic, and nationalistic pan-Indian aspects:

"Peyotism, then, is a redemptive movement, a religion of Indians involved in, but not full participants in the White world. It provides a validation of their partial separation and identity, an ethic adaptive to their social position, and a set of compensations for their most pressing deprivations." (Aberle 1966, p. 337)

Members of this church believe that peyote was given by God to the American Indians in order that they might communicate more directly with Him. Ritual and liturgy is the product of a syncretistic amalgamation of Christian forms with the ceremonial symbolism and practices of many Indian tribes. The songs entail Christian ideas expressed in Indian languages and traditional Indian melodies. Bergman (1971), who is the first psychiatrist to write on peyotism, reports that few of the 200 peyotists he interviewed experienced true hallucinations during the peyote service; pleasant visions occur at times. High ethical standards are emphasized and strict abstinence from alcohol is required. Many observers agree that peyotism is very helpful to Indians with drinking problems. Menninger called peyotism "a better antidote to alcohol than anything the missionaries, the white man, the American Medical Association, and the Public Health Service have come up with" (Bergman 1971). However, it is not the hallucinogenic cactus itself which is the antidote, it is rather the participation in the psychotherapeutic ritual of the peyote cult. Comparable results have been achieved without the use of psychotropic agents in other religious movements with a strong sense of belonging and group solidarity. Examples are provided by the New Religion, the Ghost Dance, and the Indian Shaker Church.

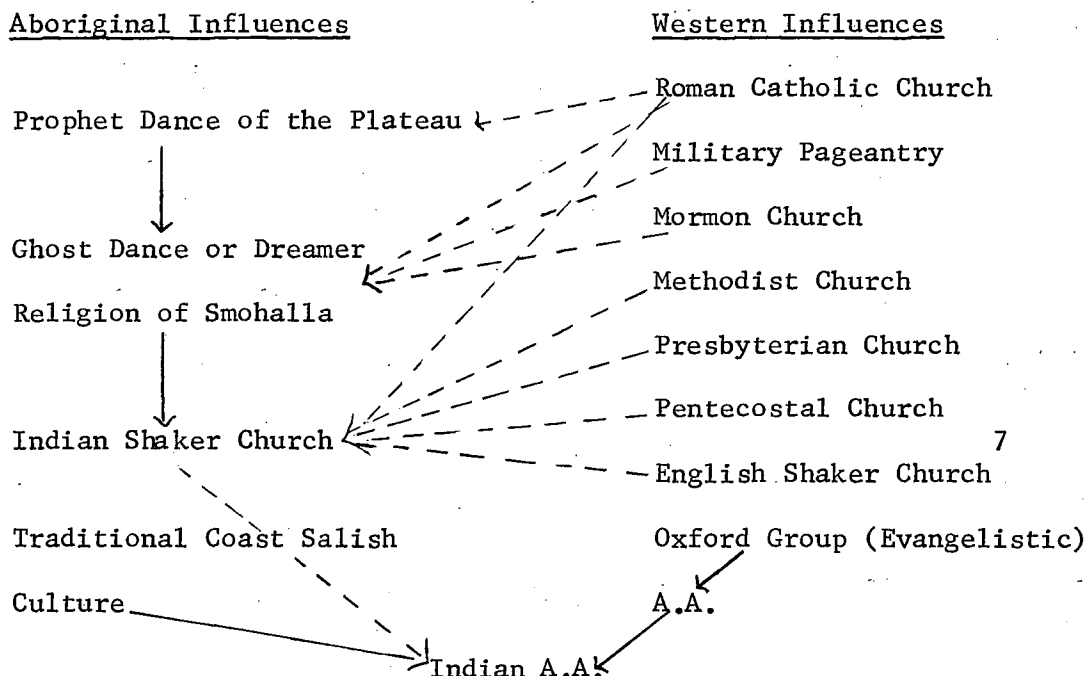
The spiritual leaders of these movements had to fulfill the myth of "death and rebirth" in order to be accepted as teachers by the Indians. Handsome Lake of the New Religion and John Slocum of the Indian Shakers were sick and "died", whereas Smohalla was "killed" in a fight. They all returned from heaven or from the spirit world after having received their revelation. They returned to their people; were "reborn" to teach their followers what they had heard and seen in the other world. Handsome Lake and John Slocum had both been heavy drinkers before they "died", and both strictly forbade their followers to indulge in alcohol and other vices, stressing complete abstinence -- just like A.A. today. John Slocum taught that those who had received the Shaker spirit would die if they as much as tested one drop of alcohol. They would then be refused entrance into heaven as was John Slocum himself, before he was allowed to return to earth to warn his people and teach them a new and better life (Barnett 1957, Mooney 1896). Handsome Lake in his gruesome revelation depicted how the drunkards had to drink molten metal which made them scream in pain, vapor steaming from their throats. This was the eternal punishment awaiting those who persisted in drinking "firewater" after having received the prophet's warning (Morgan 1851; Wallace 1952; 1959). Handsome Lake's movement became established as a church sometime between 1800 and 1850. This religious doctrine, now called Gaiwiio, has changed somewhat over the years, combining elements of Iroquois culture with Handsome Lake's original version; it is still practiced by thousands of Iroquois Indians. The two other movements men-

tioned above originated among Indians of the West. They never became as influential among the Western Indians as did the Gaiwiio religion in the East. Slocum's religion was established as the Indian Shaker Church in 1910. The Ghost Dance followers never reached the status of a church, but according to Mooney (1896) they strongly influenced the Shaker Church, especially its healing practices. The Indian Shaker Church reached the peak of its influence in the 1920's, acquiring members among Indians of Northern California, Oregon and the Coast Salish Indians of Washington and British Columbia (Collins 1950). How effective the Shakers have been in their control of alcohol abuse has been reported from the very beginning: "They practice the strictest morality, sobriety and honesty. Their 500 or 600 members are models, and it is beyond question that they do not drink whiskey, gamble or race, and are more free from vice than any other church" (Mooney 1896).

Like the peyote cult, the ceremonials of the three Indian religious movements mentioned above also contain elements of Christianity combined with traditional Indian rituals. Possession states are sought; the experience of in-group feelings and solidarity is of great importance to the participants. Peyotism has not yet reached the Coast Salish Indians. The Indian Shaker Church has been quite active until a few decades ago, and there have been small congregations of Shakers in the Chilliwack and Agassiz area. The Shaker Church is on its decline, however, and many of the older Indians with alcohol problems who formerly attained sobriety in the Shaker Church, have now switched their allegiance

to the A.A. organization. They found much the same philosophy towards liquor there as they knew it from the Shakers; although the sanctions against "falling off the wagon" are less severe in A.A. Among young Indian people, attendance at A.A. appears to be preferred; but there are still Indians who frequent both Shaker Church services and A.A. meetings.

The following schema attempts to represent the different influences affecting Coast Salish Indian A.A.



To many Indians, A.A. has become a substitute for the established Churches. In aboriginal religion it was the guardian spirit ("my spirit power") which helped a person in difficult life situations. In the Shaker Church it was the shaking ("my shake") which gave a person the power to heal and to live a wholesome life, and in A.A. it is the

7. Cf. Barnett (1957), pp. 333-336.

"Power greater than ourselves" ("my Higher Power") which guides the alcoholic Indian to sobriety. How Indians compare A.A. to a Church, and the activity during an A.A. meeting to a religious service, can easily be demonstrated. For instance, when saying the so-called "serenity prayer"⁸ (which Indians often call "sobriety prayer") at the end of the meeting, they will stand up, their heads bent, eyes closed and hands folded as in church. They also end this prayer with a loud "Amen", although this is not the custom in non-Indian A.A.

In many speeches Indians express their religious attitude towards A.A.:

"It's like religion. You confess like to the priest, only it's better because there is no priest telling you what to do."

"It was through words from the Bible that I came to A.A. We have our own Bible in A.A., the Big Book, and the twelve steps are our commandments."

"You have your own belief and I have mine. This A.A. way of life for me is my Church. All I want is my A.A. because it means my life and my sobriety."

From the turn of the century until the 1930's, the Shaker Church, more than other Churches, represented a barrier against alcohol abuse among the Coast Salish Indians. Currently the influence of Churches has diminished and for Indians with alcohol problems the A.A. organization seems to have taken over many of their functions.

When trying to predict the future of Indian A.A. it might be useful to explore the reasons for the decline of the Indian Shaker

8. So-called serenity prayer in A.A.: "God grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and wisdom to know the difference."

Church. At first the Shakers were an amorphous group without formal leadership. Shakerism was a form of personal salvation, anybody could come and go to ceremonies and whoever impressed through personal qualities was looked upon as a leader. Persecution and bitter personal experiences taught the followers that no Indian religious movement could survive without the approval of the White majority. In 1910 the Shakers, therefore, asked to be given the status of a Church "under the Laws of the State", and consequently needed the support of a White lawyer. One of the main weaknesses of the now legal Indian Shaker Church, was that its hierarchical structure -- bishops, ministers, elders and missionaries -- "has been superimposed upon a native religious movement by a White man whose model was a generic Protestant Church" (Barnett 1957, p. 124). The Coast Salish Indians had other than legalistic criteria for leadership, and the Shaker congregations found it impossible to accept a bishop or minister as a leader, just because he had been nominally elected. The consequence was that several congregations had different bishops. Bitter quarrels evolved among them about the doctrines of the Church. Rather than facing controversial issues by a demand for unity, the alternative of avoiding friction by dividing the group was preferred, as this was custom in Coast Salish culture. In the 1930's came a final split into two factions; those who wanted to emulate Christian Churches (long ceremonies with Bible reading "White" hymns, piano music and English language) and those who wanted to keep the Indian tradition (short services with more shaking and dancing, use of indigenous

languages and strong emphasis on healing practices). The former group has friendly relations with the Pentecostal Church and other Western evangelical sects. They invite White members of these sects to their church and often attend White services. This branch of the Shakers will soon disappear as a specific Indian Church (Collins 1950). The other branch subscribes to anti-White attitudes. There is a pronounced feeling among these Shakers that their religion belongs to the Indians; it is regarded as a special dispensation by God for the benefit of the Indians. But currently even this brand of Shakerism is losing adherents. Indians who want to stress their Indianness are apt to participate in the revived spirit dance ceremonials which hold more prestige among the Indians of today than the Shaker Church. Some Shakers with alcohol problems have joined Indian A.A. groups. The original Indian Shaker Church as well as the spirit dance ceremonials are rooted in traditional Indian culture and are conceived as specifically Indian; Whites are discouraged from participation. Involvement in these ceremonials is for the Indian therefore a way of solving the White-Indian conflict by segregation.

A.A. is an organization which stresses integration, and as we have demonstrated, it increases interaction between Indians and Whites. Even in Indian A.A., White members are welcome to participate, i.e. Indians involved in A.A. are striving to solve the White-Indian conflict by interaction rather than isolation. Indians might feel uncomfortably aware of their minority status when attending non-Indian A.A. meetings.

In the Indian A.A., however, they feel at home. There the situation is reversed; they are in the majority and the Whites form the minority.

Here is a constellation resembling the situation when the Indian culture was in its zenith, when the Indians as proud hosts invited the White men as their guests. In Indian A.A. they can again offer the White man a helping hand and meet with him on an even footing. The behaviour of the non-Indian guests strengthens the Indian's feeling of equality or even superiority, as most Whites frequenting Indian A.A. meetings do so for a positive reason. They confirm the Indian view that there is more "warmth", "honesty" and "friendship" in the Indian A.A. group.

A typical example of this attitude was a young seemingly depressed White alcoholic, addressing an Indian A.A. meeting on a reserve:

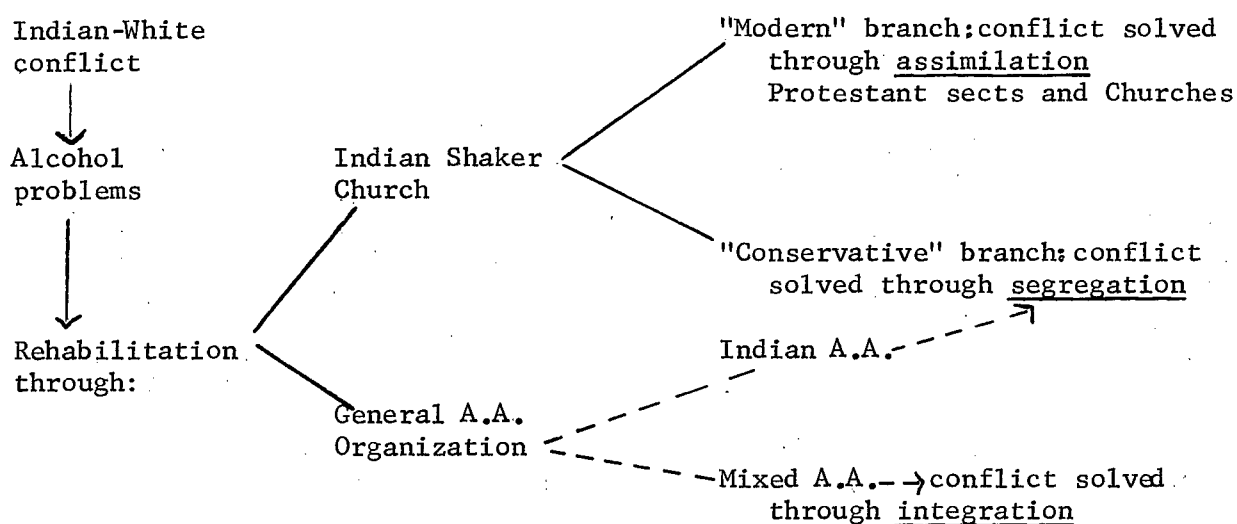
"I used to go to our own A.A. meetings for years. I would listen to the speeches and despise the speakers. I would criticize everyone of them from my seat. I felt lonely even in A.A. and I could not stop drinking. When I came to your group it was different. I feel accepted here. I feel I have friends. Your talks really sink in. I feel that what you say is honest. Through you people I have gained sobriety. You have taught me to be honest within myself. I still have to fight, but your friendship has kept me from killing myself many times....I thank every one of you for my sobriety."

White alcoholics feel inferior to other persons in their own society. As teetotallers they are often either ridiculed or accused of "spoiling the fun" for the others; as drunkards they are shunned and despised by their fellow men. Thus they are more ready to accept people of a different culture; many White alcoholics in contact with Indian A.A. groups, might recognize a certain superiority in the "Indianness" of their new friends. The Indians on the other hand, have gained self-

respect and a feeling of pride in their A.A. group. They will feel superior to some wretched White alcoholics, and find the values of their own culture superior when comparing it with certain features of White civilization.

As long as the Indian-White conflict is strongly felt by the Indians, they will continue to form separate Indian A.A. groups. In them they strengthen their self-image through resources within their aboriginal culture. With a regained self-respect they can face the non-Indian A.A. members who come to the Indian groups. Because of the positive views these Whites hold of the Indians, true friendships develop. The Indian alcoholic has the chance to solve his core-complex, i.e. the White-Indian conflict. Now he can proceed to participate in mixed A.A. groups and from there he may reach the basis of a more rewarding life in modern society. Those Coast Salish Indians who still prefer to preserve their cultural heritage have the option to take part in spirit dance ceremonials, Indian competitive sports, arts, and other Indian activities which require abstinence from alcohol. Indian A.A. groups will most likely continue to exist as an intermediate stage for Indian alcoholics on their way to sobriety. When an Indian A.A. group dissolves, its members can again join the non-Indian A.A., until a new Indian group is formed. The general A.A. organization as such is fairly stable and will most likely continue to exist as long as the alcohol problem has not found better solutions in Western society. Coast Salish Indians will most probably continue to seek help for their alcohol problems

in A.A., as this organization is relatively inoffensive to them. It appeals to Indians because participation is completely voluntary. There is no nominated leader in A.A. and therefore no competition for positions. A.A. provides an outlet for individual emotions and gives each member the possibility to interpret the "Higher Power" according to his personal inclination. It can be viewed as a form of non-organized religion like Shakerism before 1910. The following schema was derived by analysis of the development of the Shaker Church and of A.A., and may provide us with clues to the future of Indian A.A.:



Integration is understood as adaptation to modern society without giving up specific Indian culture traits. Through resolving the Indian-White conflict, Indians can hope to solve their alcohol problems by taking a self-asserting stand in modern society and feel free to fluctuate between specific Indian cultural activities and Western forms of social participation. Whether Indian A.A. groups will finally reunite

with the general A.A. to form mixed A.A. groups, or withdraw into ethnic segregation, depends mainly upon non-Indian attitudes and upon the development of Indian-White relationship in general.

CHAPTER IV

METHODS OF COMBATING INDIAN ALCOHOL ABUSE

Western Methods of Assisting Indians With Alcohol Problems

White American society has not yet succeeded in controlling alcohol abuse, either in its own members or in the Indians. The dilemma is partly due to conflicts between co-existing value systems within the society itself. At one extreme are ascetic protestant groups banning any use of alcohol as sinful, and at the other extreme are people who become alienated from their religious group and who then act out their frustration through excessive drinking. Alcohol abuse to them becomes the symbol of revolt and of freedom. Most Americans who are in between these two extremes, have an ambivalent cultural attitude towards the use of alcohol (Pittman 1967). Pittman maintains that only cultures with a completely negative attitude towards alcoholic beverages and with strict prohibitive laws against any type of alcohol intake for their own people, can effectively impose liquor prohibition laws upon a minority group within the larger society. Western laws forbidding Indians to purchase or drink alcoholic beverages, and imposing fines and prison terms upon drunken behaviour in Indians have never been very successful and have been viewed by the Indians as manipulative measures to subdue them. Moral indignation towards "the drunken Indian" is interpreted as discrimination since the same drunken behaviour among non-Indians does not produce the same disapproval.

Western law enforcement against alcohol abuse by Indians has only increased Indian hostility towards the Whites. Indian drinking and drunken behaviour often becomes a symbol of defiance towards White authority. Hawthorn et al. (1960) in their study of the British Columbia Indians, observed that a high proportion of law violations for which Indians were apprehended, such as aggressive behaviour, burglary, robbery and theft, were directly or indirectly alcohol-connected. Being sent to prison bears no stigma among many Indian groups. On the contrary, Indians returning from prison are often looked upon with a certain admiration for having dared to annoy and oppose White authority. Indians jailed for alcohol offences do not view themselves as criminals and deeply resent being imprisoned together with non-Indian criminals and having to obey orders from rude White prison guards. The experiences they gain during confinement only increase the pre-existing hostility towards White authority and reinforce the Indian drinking pattern. Law enforcement agencies fail in preventing Indian alcoholism and in rehabilitating a significant number of Indians already addicted to alcohol. More success in rehabilitating Indian alcoholics and in preventing alcoholism must be credited to the various Christian Churches working among the Coast Salish Indians. Among Protestant groups the Methodist Church has played a major role in the fight against alcohol abuse. Best known is Thomas Crosby, an ardent anti-alcoholic Methodist minister who gained great influence and numerous followers among Indians around Nanaimo and in the Fraser Valley in the early 1860's. In recent years

the Pentecostal Church has increased its activity among the Indians, and their strict sanctions against any form of alcohol use have made converts among Indian alcoholics. The Salvation Army, with larger congregations among the northern Indian tribes of British Columbia, has a more indirect function among the Coast Salish Indians, helping impoverished Indian alcoholics find food and shelter in the bigger cities, and offering rehabilitation centers to those who wish to find sobriety through Christian beliefs.

Conversions of Indian excessive drinkers to evangelistic Churches have an unfortunate tendency to follow the same pattern; at first the converts are deeply involved in the church practices and gladly reject the use of alcohol. But with time the new enthusiasm decreases. Disappointments, either with religious practices or because of some real or imagined social slight or rejection by non-Indians, disillusion the Indians. They retreat from the Church and sooner or later return to their former drinking habits, probably even more resentful and bitter than before.

One of the most interesting forms of proselytization among the Coast Salish Indians was the so-called "Indian State", created by the Oblate Fathers under the leadership of Bishop Durieu among the Sechelt Indians and adjacent Indian communities during the period from 1868 to 1910. Bishop Durieu was convinced that in order for an imposed social control system to work, it was necessary to incorporate aboriginal culture traits and to teach natives to control their own people.

By ascribing important new roles to members from high ranking families, Durieu allowed pre-existing status differences to continue. Chiefs and sub-chiefs with Indian "watchmen" reported on the people's behaviour to the priests. Old Coast Salish taboos and rituals were respected insofar as they did not directly compete with Catholic dogma and church practices. Those Indian rituals which offended Catholic beliefs were substituted by colorful Church festivities. For decades Bishop Durieu's Indian state was a great success. The congregations were described by independent observers as consisting of honest, industrial people of high morale, free of alcoholism or other vices (Lemert 1955; Duff 1964).

But the Oblate Fathers misjudged the intensity of the Coast Salish Indians' aversion to imposed authority and the different concepts the Indians had of sin and crime. As the local Chief and his helpers could not well suppress behaviour which neither they nor the people regarded as wrong, the punishment for infractions tended to pass directly into the hands of the Oblate priests. The strangers therefore became the executive authority, in spite of the theoretically autonomous system. The priests constantly decreed musts, which the Indians resented, such as: You must give up Indian dancing; you must shun the shamans; you must stay away from potlatches; you must give up alcoholic beverages and gambling. Latent hostility plagued Bishop Durieu's Indian state, and punishments became increasingly unpopular and in the eyes of the Indians, out of proportion, especially for drunkenness, non-attendance of Church services, and adultery (Lemert 1955). By 1910 the system fell apart, as the Indians had become acquainted with English-speaking Whites who at best laughed at

the Catholic priests and taught the Indians the rough but freer manners of loggers and fishermen. At the same time the French-speaking Oblate Fathers withdrew from the region, and the younger English-speaking priests were less ascetic. The Indians quickly lost respect for Catholic teachings. Their allegiance turned into disappointment and bitter accusations against the clergy. The young Indians who saw their parents' frustration, rebelled against them and the priests. Pointedly refusing to obey Church regulations, they started to drink alcohol and break the moral code of the Catholic Church.

The majority of Coast Salish Indians are still nominally Catholic, but few attend mass regularly or go to confession. The Catholic residential schools face grave disciplinary problems and can exert only little control over alcohol abuse among the young. The Catholic Church at present has few means to help Indians with alcohol problems.¹ Charitable organizations help impoverished Indians, and the "Legion of Mary" succeeds from time to time in forming groups of abstinent members, mostly women, who are sent out to work on the reserves. These courageous ladies make a pledge to visit Indian families, preaching against alcohol abuse and inviting them to attend mass; but disenchanted by their unpopularity among the Indians they soon give up. Some Indians with alcohol problems will go to the priest, confess and "take the pledge", i.e. sign a paper promising God and the priest to stay sober for a certain length of time. Catholic priests are often seen at Indian A.A. meetings and they lend

1. According to personal communications by Catholic priests.

Church-owned localities to the Indians for their A.A. gatherings. Through these and other similar activities, Catholic priests are again gaining in popularity, not as authority figures imposing rules on the Indians, but through friendly assistance in times of trouble and sorrow.

As chronic alcohol abuse sooner or later leads to accidental injuries, internal diseases, and psychiatric disorders, the alcoholic will also need medical help throughout his drinking life. But even though physicians for centuries have been well aware of the bad effects of alcohol and have declared alcoholism an illness, they have not been able to find a cure for this affliction. While the treatment of physical ailments resulting from alcohol abuse is steadily improving, it is the emotional and mental disturbances which cause the greatest suffering to the alcoholic himself and to his whole family. Already 19th century psychiatrists were able to diagnose any type of psychiatric disorder resulting from acute and chronic intoxication (Morel 1860; Griesinger 1867). Attempts at healing alcoholism with psychiatric methods have resulted in cures of the occasional patient, but have not solved the epidemiologic problem of alcoholism. On the whole, Western medicine has contributed little to the treatment of alcoholism among Whites and Indians alike. Those physicians who have looked into the work of Alcoholics Anonymous, unanimously agree that A.A. is by far the most effective method in helping alcoholics.

It is therefore of importance to look again at A.A., and especially at Indian A.A., when discussing the most effective methods of helping Indians with alcohol problems.

Indian A.A. groups among the Coast Salish population are comparatively small, and attendance varies with the seasons. In winter during the spirit dance season and in summer during the time of salmon fishing and berry picking, few Indians attend A.A. meetings. Turn-out for meetings varies seasonally from a mere 10 people to more than 40 in the same locality. The small group of faithful attenders become well acquainted with each other. Their speech-making tends to become monotonous; gossip, family strife and animosity between certain members tend to disturb the functioning of the group. Active members try to overcome these tendencies by inviting non-alcoholics to the meetings, by arranging big "birthday" parties and by organizing trips to other Indian and non-Indian A.A. gatherings. But the lack of funds always hampers Indian initiative. Another disturbing fact about Indian A.A. is the type of contact with non-Indians which the Indians have in A.A. As mentioned above, non-Indian alcoholics use A.A. as their last resource, and they are, therefore, usually much more impaired than most of the Indians in A.A. Needless to say many of these old alcoholics as well as the young sociopaths gathered from the prison camps to attend Indian A.A. meetings, are anything but inspiring companions. Since Indians today lack any form of cheerful recreation without alcohol intake, the abstinent Indians have few sources of entertainment besides their A.A. meetings. Because of financial restrictions Indian A.A. meetings are held at small, unattractive places with few facilities, often dirty and poorly heated, with beer bottles and other left-overs from parties scattered around. No wonder that Indians who have faithfully

attended A.A. meetings over long periods of time get a somewhat narrow, dim view on life, become bored and depressed and easily "fall off the wagon", if for no other reason than to again have some fun with their fellow Indians in a lush, warm beer parlour.

Summary: Western Methods of assisting Indians with alcohol problems.

Law-enforcement agencies	Temporary relief from alcohol abuse, through removal from alcohol sources. Relapse as a rule upon return to community. Alcohol problem often increases rather than improves through these methods.
Evangelical sects Protestant Churches	At first followers convert to an abstinent new way of life. Disappointments about religious practices or White church members return the Indian to his former life style and drinking habits.
Catholic Church	Temporary success. Too authoritarian to suit the majority of Coast Salish Indians. Generally insufficient emphasis on abstinence to help Indians with severe alcohol problems.
Medical Profession	Helping in physical and mental crisis situations caused by alcohol abuse. No general solution of the alcoholism problem.
Alcoholics Anonymous	Hitherto most efficient approach to alcoholism. Many Indians remain suffering from boredom and depression. Only partial solution to Indian alcohol problem.

New Trends in Approaching the Indian Alcohol Problem

Realization that few Indians suffering from the consequences of alcohol abuse have been helped by the traditional medical or religious approach, or through non-Indian chapters of Alcoholics Anonymous, has in

the United States led to a closer cooperation between agencies involved with these problems. Funds for research and for pioneer multi-professional projects have been made available and an Indian Health Service Task Force on Alcoholism has been established. Its recent statement clearly shows the urgency of the task:

"The Indian Health Service considers alcoholism to be one of the most significant and urgent health problems facing the Indians and Alaska Native people today. Probably no other condition adversely affects so many aspects of Indian life...."
(Indian Health Service 1969)

As a result of cooperation between the medical profession, the Indian Health Service, University staff (anthropologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists and social workers), correctional and public health services, a new approach to the Indian alcohol problem is developing, and the organization of tribal alcohol treatment projects is a recent result. Their programs emphasize identification with Indian culture, Indian involvement in planning and operation, and the utilization of Indian counselors for individual and family counselling. An Indian training center has been established at the University of Utah to train counselors, many of whom are former Indian alcoholics (Shore 1970).

Let us take as examples of this new approach the "Community Treatment Plan for Navaho Problem Drinkers" (Ferguson 1968; 1970) and the "Indian Tribal Alcohol Treatment Programs" (Shore 1970). The Navaho program

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is medically oriented, using disulfiram therapy. The treatment program includes hospitalization with detoxication, disulfiram administration, group therapy, individual and family counselling. In the first 18 months of follow-up, Navaho community alcoholism field workers assist by supervising intake of medication, report to the Center on the patients' progress and help the Indians to find jobs or obtain welfare aid. Many of these former alcoholics are encouraged to attend the Native American Church (Peyote Cult) as this Church has proven to be positively effective in helping Indians to become abstinent (Aberle 1966; Bergman 1971). Two years after initiation of treatment it was recorded that drunkenness arrests were reduced by 76% during the treatment period (Ferguson 1968). The Center had best results with older Indians who had been excessive drinkers for years, but who had few acculturation problems. Their drinking pattern had been of the recreation type, i.e., they were drinking in bouts within a peer group. They responded well to practical measures such as structuring and regulating their daily life, and they quickly found new friends and new fields of activity among non-alcoholic fellow Indians.

The Indian tribal alcohol treatment programs (Jicarilla Apache, Ute, and Nevada intertribal) as described and discussed by Shore (1970)

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2. Disulfiram or Antabuse is a medication to be taken daily as long as the treatment lasts. It produces an extremely unpleasant reaction with nausea, hot flushes and headaches as soon as alcoholic beverages are ingested. After repeated experiences of this kind the alcoholic develops an aversion against the taste and even the smell of alcohol.

evolved within the Indian communities with official tribal government sponsorship. The programs combine the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous for readjustment to a non-drinking life with family counselling, vocational rehabilitation, alcohol education and youth involvement; employing non-drinking Indian alcoholics as individual case workers, and respecting the special characteristics of each cultural group.

The three programs had in 1970 reached a total of 642 cases. The Apache program had been in operation for four, the Nevada for three, and the Ute program for one year, when the following results were published: Definite improvement in 56% of all cases; 17% of cases lost to follow-up, and only 27% classified as unimproved. This is an astoundingly high success rate and a clear indication that the broad, multi-professional approach to the solution of the Indian alcohol problem is a step in the right direction.

The Alcoholic Foundation of British Columbia, which has facilities for group therapy, family counselling and medical treatment for all alcoholics, has no programs specifically designed to meet the needs of Indian alcoholics; neither have the few detoxication centers and halfway houses available to alcoholics in British Columbia. The only significant initiatives seem to come from a few Indians themselves, mostly from active members of Indian A.A. groups. As far as is known to this investigator, only three Coast Salish Indians have part-time employment with the Alcoholic Foundation of British Columbia. They are supposed to

investigate alcohol problems on Indian reserves, but neither of them has received any education or training concerning alcoholism and the availability of facilities. A few Indian A.A. members are presently approaching government agencies and other sources for grants in order to start Indian-sponsored rehabilitation programs for Indian alcoholics.

The history of Western and Indian efforts to fight Indian alcohol abuse tells us that any program which is organized and run by non-Indians, is doomed to failure even if it at first evokes curiosity and a certain cooperation from the Indians. Since Indians perceive the dominant Western society as oppressive, and since Indian drinking problems are nourished by the White-Indian conflict, it is psychologically difficult for the Indians to have confidence in any therapeutic assistance organized and administered by the very society which they feel oppresses them. This dilemma applies also to the organization of Alcoholics Anonymous when run by non-Indians, as has been reported by several observers and again confirmed in a personal communication by R.W. Brown, Director of Ute Tribe Alcoholism Program:

"In response to your inquiry for information regarding Alcoholics Anonymous groups on this reservation, I would briefly state that participation in A.A. here seems to be determined by the work of my (White) staff members who are members of A.A. themselves. I believe that if these people were to disappear the meetings would discontinue. A.A. does not seem to be an integrated pattern of living for those (Indians) who attend the meetings nor does it seem to have become established with Indian leadership as an important meeting or program through which many Indians here maintain sobriety."

The non-Indian leadership appears to have again drowned Indian initiative here. Since the A.A. meetings on the reservation did

not result from their own efforts, A.A. did not become "an integrated pattern of living for those Indians who attend the meetings". From the example of the Coast Salish, we have seen how the Indians have to re-organize A.A. and to re-shape its philosophy to suit their own concepts, before A.A. develops into a successful device in their fight against alcohol abuse.

Any assistance by governments, or other Western sources, to combat alcohol abuse among Indians, should therefore be made available to Indian organizations; in the case of the Coast Salish, to the nucleus already evolved, namely the Indian A.A. groups. Even modest financial support for Indian A.A. groups would greatly improve their functioning. With small funds they could hold their meetings in more attractive and spacious rooms, where they could then arrange for more enjoyable non-alcoholic parties, and allow their members to visit other A.A. groups and conventions more frequently, thus giving new impulses to disenchanted participants.

Ideally Indian A.A. meetings should be held at Indian community centers where A.A. members would have an opportunity to interact with the non-alcoholic population.

Such an Indian community center should consist of:

- 1) a "drop-in" center for Indians with facilities for individual and family counselling, legal and job opportunity advice and public health consultation.
- 2) A library and museum which emphasizes and furthers interest in Indian culture, language, history and arts, around which should be

centered educational programs, such as Indian language courses and Indian arts and crafts work shops.

- 3) Conference facilities for A.A. and other group meetings and for educational programs concerning alcoholism and drug abuse, its prevention and treatment.
- 4) Cafeteria and other facilities for social gatherings and recreation.

Indian community centers of this type would greatly reduce the boredom Indians suffer, especially on rural reserves. The young Indians would have a place to go for fun without having to resort to beer parlours and liquor parties. Oldtimers with knowledge of Coast Salish culture should be encouraged to teach the younger generation the traditional behavioural norms of emotional restraint, personal dignity and self-respect so contrary to drunken behaviour. Through training in arts and crafts young Indians learning the skills of their elders and ancestors would arouse the admiration and respect of their non-Indian peers. Sports and games open to non-Indians and Indians alike, would provide the basis for peaceful competition between ethnic groups. As host at prestigious social events the Indian's self-esteem would be increased so that he can dispense with the chemically induced transient ego-boosting effects of liquor.

Non-Indian professionals involved in any type of assistance to Indians have a tendency to take over and then leave after a limited period of time. No program concerned with Indian problems has a chance to be implemented if the organizational, administrative and

executive functions are not left in the hands of the local people themselves with non-Indian assistance mainly in the form of consultation.

Only under the conditions outlined above will an organized effort to combat alcoholism and to help Indians solve their drinking problem, have a chance to succeed.

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APPENDIX

Guidelines of the A.A. Organization

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

The 12 Steps of A.A.

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol -- that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The 12 Traditions of A.A.

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority -- a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose -- to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Questionnaire Used as Guideline in Structured Interviews with Indian A.A. Members

1. Do you think you have an alcohol problem?
2. Can you explain the reasons for your drinking problem?

3. What is Alcoholics Anonymous?
4. What does "Anonymous" mean?
5. When -- and how -- did you become a member of A.A.?
6. Discuss the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions.
7. Is it sometimes difficult for you to attend meetings? And if yes -- why?
8. What has helped you the most in A.A.?
9. Why did some Indians start an A.A. group for themselves?
10. What do you prefer, a mixed or an Indian A.A. meeting?
11. What do you prefer, a White or an Indian sponsor?
12. What do you think is different in the Indian A.A. from the general A.A.?
13. Is it easier for you to speak up in the Indian A.A. group than in the general A.A.?
14. Do you mind telling your life-story?
15. Is it like a confession to give your A.A. speech? Do you dislike it?
16. What does "a Power greater than ourselves" mean to you?
17. How do you go about it to help other Indians with alcohol problems?
18. What do you think is the most effective way in helping an alcoholic?
19. What difficulties are facing the Indian A.A. groups?
20. What facilities would you like to have for alcoholics in your community?