Highlights of a Conversation with two Saskatchewan Health Centres

Culture has helped him [the Elder] in his journey of healing from not only addictions but residential schools. He spent 21 years working with NNADAP. Culture helps him with his “everyday counseling” It is “training for his job” – he passes it onto his clients. He was retired for five years and then was asked to come back and do more work. Working with NNADAP he is always going above and beyond. He takes clients to sweats – detox is so filled up so he takes them to sweats instead. People come around because of the way Elders speak to them. They don’t speak at them and it’s a different dynamic than a treatment centre. He talks outside with his patients. He takes clients to the creek, makes a pot of tea and talks. It’s so natural, people really open up to him. **I’m living proof of how living traditional can help you heal from addictions.** He’s lectured at the university on incorporating culture. He went to residential school, provincial jail, federal jail. He came out and started working with the province. Took bible studies but there was still an emptiness until he stood in the Raindance Lodge with his grandfather. He makes Raindances as well – the way his grandfather taught him during prohibition, his community hung the Union Jack at their Raindances so that they could fall into a loop hole, they were like a church flying the flag, and so the Indian agent would allow them to continue. Culture and religion are like railways tracks to him - they are similar and do similar things but they never touch. Children need to know that their culture is there when they need it and want it. When he was healing the Elders took him to a sweat every night. They never left him alone, and then always had somewhere for him to go each night. They were detoxing him. He had a dream where he was on the inside of his lodge and everyone else was on the outside - it was showing how many of his people need to heal.

Anonymous
We need to remember that it is the old people, the traditions, and the spirits that have the healing power and we need to recognize that its something that is special and we might not always be able to write about it.