





Report title: The Haudenosaunee Code of Behaviour for Traditional Medicine Healers

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Under the *Canadian Constitution Act, 1982*, the term Aboriginal Peoples refers to First Nations, Inuit and Métis people living in Canada. However, common use of the term is not always inclusive of all three distinct people and much of the available research only focuses on particular segments of the Aboriginal population. NAHO makes every effort to ensure the term is used appropriately.

## Acknowledgements

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We would like to acknowledge the leadership of the Iroquois Confederacy, including our traditional leaders of the Haudenosaunee: the Chiefs, Clan Mothers, and Faith Keepers. These are the people who have continually upheld our spiritual and cultural laws as well as the historical agreements with external governments and authorities. The survival of our nations depends on how we, the people of the Haudenosaunee, continue to support the principles and cultural lifestyles advocated by our traditional leadership.

We would like to acknowledge the Elders of Akwesasne who always made time to support the staff of the Centre for Nation Building in meetings and workshops. The Elders continuously give encouragement at home in recognizing the importance of the *Onkwehonwe* responsibility to maintain our traditional medicine practices within our communities.

We would like to acknowledge James Lamouche for working with us and being our link between Elders, the Centre for Nation Building, and the National Aboriginal Health Organization. We would like to acknowledge Brenda Lafrance, Director of Health for Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, for sharing the vision of our Elders with the Centre for Nation Building so that we can maintain our traditional medicine practices in a modern-day society. We would like to acknowledge Emmy Mitchell, Co-ordinator of Traditional Medicine for Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, for the time she has spent in recent years with Haudenosaunee Elders and traditional people, interpreting and maintaining essential traditional knowledge within our health programs.

To the youth of the Haudenosaunee Nations: There is a growing movement amongst our youth recognizing the importance of preserving the traditional practices of the Haudenosaunee. We see evidence of this among the various singing societies of our nations, in the education system, in the revival of our languages, and, most importantly, in the attendance at our traditional ceremonies. Protecting our traditional medicine practices, as well as the authority and jurisdiction of our healers in the manner of spiritual practices, will benefit our youth and future generations of the Haudenosaunee.

Sken:nen,

Michael Kanentakeron Mitchell  
Executive Director, Centre for Nation Building

## Executive Summary

In the spring of 2003, the Centre for Nation Building was asked by the National Aboriginal Health Organization to develop a draft strategy and/or model to protect and promote traditional healing practices. The model was to be based upon the traditions and structures of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

The work was initiated with the intent that this model could be shared with other Aboriginal Peoples to foster discussion and assist in the development of similar nation-based or community-based activities.

The Centre for Nation Building obtained input from members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and individuals within these communities recognized for their knowledge of the traditional healing practices of the Haudenosaunee. Many issues were raised and discussed during the meetings that took place. A central issue was the development of a Haudenosaunee code of behavior for traditional medicine healers. Other questions or concerns were raised relating to the use of other Aboriginal traditions within Haudenosaunee communities, the appropriation of medicinal knowledge by non-Aboriginal individuals or companies, loss of language, and the issues associated with non-Aboriginal governments infringing on treaty and Aboriginal rights in this area.

*The Haudenosaunee Code of Behaviour for Traditional Medicine Healers* was prepared by the Centre for Nation Building and draws from the information that was gathered from discussions with Elders, healers and community members throughout the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. This document represents one possible model as a path forward for individuals, communities and nations as they seek to protect and promote traditional healing practices and knowledge. It also provides information on other activities that have been undertaken in the area of traditional healing practices and knowledge.

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## Introduction

The Centre for Nation Building (CNB), in collaboration with the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne's Holistic Health and Wellness Program, conducted a series of community meetings on traditional medicine throughout various Haudenosaunee communities. Community members and Elders expressed a concern that their young families, and in particular their youth, seem to be more attracted to the spiritual practices of other nations.

Haudenosaunee communities expressed great concerns over families practicing other nation's teachings and seemingly forsaking their own traditions. Of central concern was what they referred to as new age healers, both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal, who use spiritual teachings. More specifically, members and Elders were worried that new age healers were bringing non-Haudenosaunee ceremonies, such as the use of peyote sage, sweet grass, ceremonial pipes, sweat lodges and tee-pees, into their communities. Another concern was that the spirit names that are often given in other ceremonies seem to be far more attractive than Mohawk names.

After lengthy discussions, the authors of this report have come to the conclusion that our young Haudenosaunee families are searching for a Native spiritual identity. Ultimately, we need to ask ourselves: What are Haudenosaunee healing practices? What is our relationship to the healers? What relationship do the healers have with each other? What relationship do the healers have with other nations? How do we conduct our healing practices and how much of our traditional practices can be incorporated into modern practice? These are things we need to identify. Canada's threat to regulate traditional medicine is another concern with serious implications for the survival of our traditional medicine practices.

It is for these reasons that the CNB has developed *The Haudenosaunee Code of Behaviour for Traditional Medicine Healers*. By sharing information on traditional medicine amongst our Haudenosaunee communities, we can affirm and protect our traditional practices.

If our own traditional healing practices are to survive, then we need to reinforce the confidence in one another that our Elders had in past generations. The document we have prepared represents the collective thoughts of our Elders, healers, and community members. Please contact the CNB with any thoughts and/or comments related to this document.

## Haudenosaunee Relations

The relationship between the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans began in the 17th century when the Europeans asked to live on the Great Turtle Island and a treaty with the Dutch was established. The Two-Row Wampum Belt, known as *Kaswehntha*, recorded the treaty for future generations. The written records of the Dutch also record this treaty.

When the treaty discussions began, the Dutch proposed that the Haudenosaunee would come under their protection. In this way, the Dutch would be like a father and the Haudenosaunee would be like their children. The Haudenosaunee said the only acceptable relationship was that of brothers and rejected the Dutch approach.

They showed the Dutch a belt consisting of two rows of purple wampum shell separated by three white rows. They said the two purple rows symbolized two vessels travelling together on a river, side-by-side. One vessel, a ship, represented the Dutch. The other vessel, a canoe, represented the Haudenosaunee. Inside each vessel are their respective peoples and their society, including their customs, laws and ways of life. The three white rows between the two vessels, they said, symbolized *Sken:nen* (peace), *Kariwi:io* (a good mind) and *Kasastensera* (strength). These principles help to keep the two peoples healthy and in peace.

The Two-Row Wampum Treaty Belt is given mutual recognition by the treaty signatories. This recognition signifies that the two nations are distinct and that each has the right and jurisdiction to steer their own vessel without interference from the other. Both vessels are meant to travel the river together, side-by-side, with each helping the other from time-to-time. These are the principles of self-government and self-determination.

History states that the Dutch were the first to make a nation-to-nation agreement with the Haudenosaunee. Many more European nations followed the Dutch in their political dealings with the Haudenosaunee people, including the German, French, and English, and, later, the Thirteen Fires that, in turn, became the United States of America.

The Two-Row Wampum calls for co-operation to serve a common interest. There is only one river and the people in both vessels must protect it. Mutual respect for each other's rights and jurisdictions makes this co-operation possible. These concepts and values have been passed down through the ages to guide the Haudenosaunee in their conduct in all manner of circumstances.



## **The Story of Our Medicines: From the beginning of time**

From the very beginning, Haudenosaunee have been given original instructions that tell us who we are, why we were given life, what our responsibilities are as human beings, and how we are to go about life on this earth. Sometimes these instructions came in the form of stories, giving each of us the opportunity to find our own meaning within. Different storytellers recounted their stories in different ways. One of these stories provided instructions about Haudenosaunee medicines.

It is said that before people were here on this earth they lived in a sky world. It is here, in the sky world, that the Creator provided the people with everything necessary for their lives. All they needed to do was to follow their original instructions.

In this sky world, there lived a family whose responsibility was to care for a magnificent tree rooted in the centre of their world, called the Tree of Life. One day the Treekeeper's pregnant wife began craving exotic foods and requested bark and roots from the Tree of Life. The husband refused, but the wife insisted until one day he did as she asked and uprooted the Tree. The man and his wife peered in a vast depth of darkness. As the woman leaned further into the hole, she started to fall from her world. To save herself, she quickly reached out to grab hold of something. With one hand she grabbed a strawberry plant. With the other hand, she grabbed a tobacco plant.

The story tells us that the young woman fell through the blackness of the hole for a very long time until she saw what appeared beneath her a great body of water. In the water, there lived all kinds of waterfowl. Two huge geese saw this human being descending from the sky and decided something must be done to save her. Alerting the other waterfowl, the birds all gathered below her to catch her on their giant wings. A great turtle had also responded to the cries of the geese and waited for the birds to gently lay the young woman on its back.

The beings of the water world convened a council meeting about this strange event and gathered around woman to question her. They asked her who she was and where she was from. She told them how she missed her home and that she was lonely. They asked what they could do to make her more comfortable and happy now that she was in their home. She saw what was missing and said, "What I don't see here that is in my world is land. All there is here is water."

The water beings said, "Underneath the water, there is land. If that will make you happy, we will go down there and get some for you." The loon volunteered first because it was an experienced diver and it was able to disappear for long periods of time under the water. After a long time under the water, the loon surfaced without completing the mission. One after another, the beaver, the dolphin, and the seal all tried to gather land from beneath the water, and failed. With hope fast fading, a humble and tiny voice said, "Let me try." At first, no one heard, but the voice persisted. "I can do it. I know I can," the voice said. The other creatures looked down to see the otter. Determined, the otter

dove deep underwater and collected a little bit of earth. When he hit the surface, the otter died, but in his paws he clutched a little bit of earth. The creatures took the earth and put it on the back of the giant sea turtle.

The woman danced in a circle following the direction of the sun. As she did this, the earth and the turtle began to grow. The land began to develop and take shape. This new world was now their home. This dance is still practiced by the Haudenosaunee women as part of their healing medicine and in celebration of all creation. It also represents their connection to Mother Earth.

Soon after this new world had begun its transformations, the Sky Woman gave birth to a baby girl. The baby girl was special for she was destined to give birth to twins. The Sky Woman was heartbroken when her daughter died while giving birth to her twin boys.

The Sky Woman buried her daughter in the ground and planted in her grave the plants and leaves she clutched upon descending from the sky world. Not long after, over her daughter's head grew corn, beans, and squash. These were later known as the Three Sisters. From her heart grew the sacred tobacco, which is now used as an offering to send greetings to the Creator. At her feet grew the strawberry plants, along with other plants now used as medicines to cure illnesses. The earth itself was referred to as Our Mother by the Creator of Life, because their mother had become one with the earth.

There is much more to our oral traditions, but the crux of this story explains how the Haudenosaunee received their knowledge of traditional medicines—medicines that are used by the traditional healers in ceremonies and healings to this day. Traditional medicine, as practiced by Haudenosaunee people, is key to the health and survival of Haudenosaunee as a nation.

The following document is a guide that has been created to open the door for the Haudenosaunee of the 21st century to embrace knowledge of traditional medicine and preserve this knowledge for the children of today and for the seven generations yet to come.



## **Our Discussions: The Haudenosaunee Approach**

Just as the sea creatures gave us their example of how to hold council, we too have held discussions about Haudenosaunee medicine. Elders, healers, traditional leaders, and community members from Six Nations, Akwesasne, Kahnawake, Onondaga, and Tyendinaga have shared their thoughts on this subject.

We know that in earlier times, the Haudenosaunee Nations had a well-developed system of traditional medicine. Each traditional healer had certain professional responsibilities to fulfill, including meeting high ethical and professional standards.

In the past century, Haudenosaunee medicine has been attacked as superstition, witchcraft, and/or ineffective medicine. Modern western medical practices, defined by university-trained doctors working in hospitals, were established as the only type of effective medicine.

In recent years, however, western health specialists have been willing to take another look at traditional medicine. They were surprised to see that healers actually healed and that traditional medicine was effective. The time has come for Haudenosaunee traditional medicine to reassert itself, regain credibility and value, and serve the Haudenosaunee again.

We agree that it is us, the Haudenosaunee, who must take responsibility for ensuring that our traditional practices are protected and maintained. It is us, the Haudenosaunee, who must teach our children about our approach to health and healing, and about the power of a good mind.

It will be important that traditional healers maintain control of the Haudenosaunee traditional medicine rebuilding process. Of equal importance is that the Haudenosaunee maintain control of the results of this process.

It is common practice for professional experts to organize themselves and establish their own standards of practice and traditional healers are no exception. They too organize themselves to establish their own standards of practice. These standards could include such matters as, how long an apprentice must study before being accredited as a healer, when patient referrals should be made, and/or the disciplining of violators.

Professionals also establish codes of ethics to govern their conduct. Such codes deal with principles of confidentiality and obligations to use their knowledge only for good.

At each of the various community meetings about traditional medicine, we discussed when our own medicine practices can and cannot work with western medicine and with other emerging alternative practices.

The term traditional medicine has been defined by the World Health Organization as:

...the sum total of knowledge, skills, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences Indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness. (WHO/EDM/Traditional Medicine/Definitions, modified: Tuesday, 30 October 2001)

In our meetings, we considered the profound question of whether our medicines and ceremonies can be effective if they are not a part of a way of life and our beliefs.

The fact that our traditional approach to health and healing is different than the approach brought to the Americas by Europeans should not be surprising. Our cultures and traditions—our understanding of our original instructions and our spiritual practices—have meant that we have an altogether different body of knowledge.

The time has come for us to exert our jurisdiction and right to govern ourselves and reassert our traditional medicine practices. The situation in Canada has given emphasis to our need for action. One of the actions is to develop a “Code of Behaviour” that could be adopted by traditional healers. Another action will be a list of projects that need to be undertaken.

There are some provocative questions to be discussed among the Haudenosaunee communities, such as:

- How do we integrate our traditional practices with today’s health care systems?
- How do we re-learn what we have lost when we have also lost the knowledge of how to learn?
- What are our responsibilities as human beings to make our lives more human?



## **Peace, Power, Health, and Healing: Becoming human beings again**

At one time in our history, we knew peace, power, health, and healing. We were raised with them throughout our lives. They were the way we did things; a common understanding as natural as breathing. We were given our sacred songs, words to greet the natural life, ceremonies to give thanks for the life cycle, language to recognize ourselves for who we are, and knowledge and respect for our sacred medicines.

Today, we have been confused by other values and beliefs that are very different from our own. We have lost many parts of the original instructions given to us by *Sonkwaiatison* (Our Creator). How will we ever find our way back, so that we can move forward? Written words seem so inflexible, so final. However, maybe they can help us think. The words in this document are intended to do exactly that—to make us think; to help rebuild ourselves, our lives, and our approach to health and healing; and, most importantly, to become comfortable with difference.

### **Becoming Comfortable With Differences**

Our traditional Haudenosaunee practices were given to us. They came as a whole way of life—every part of it dependent on other facets of our life. They were not meant to pick and choose different facets we find convenient, while discarding other facets. Our traditional Haudenosaunee practices were meant for us. They are ours to use. Our traditional practices are not superior. They are what were given to us.

### **Health and Healing**

Part of our way of life has to do with our traditions, our rules, how we deal with medicines and our traditional approach to health. We have ignored many of these rules and these natural laws. We have also encountered unfortunate consequences. We are beginning to understand that if we take the best of our knowledge about traditional medicine and use it, we can be restored to health.



## **Traditional Medicine Healers**

All of creation is a part of our healing and health.

The animals and birds are among the earliest teachers of medicines.

Our children, Elders, and family can be good medicine.

Our specialists include medicine people, seers, healers, ceremonial helpers, and speakers of ceremony.

We have our Elders, teachers, singers, drum keepers, Clan Mothers, Faith Keepers, and chiefs.

We have our medicine societies and traditional medicine practitioners.

**All of them help us with our health and healing.**

For this reason, we treasure these helpers and give them our respect.

They are the keepers of our cultures, our ceremonies, and our traditional knowledge.

They are the guides for our spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

Each has special gifts through their knowledge.

They offer the words that open our days and our meetings.

They remind us to respect and give thanks to the food we eat and the water we drink.

They provide us with names and help us understand our dreams and our future.

They purify our places, conduct sweat lodges, and move the ceremonies.

They hold advice, guidance, wisdom, knowledge, and experience.





## **Asking for Help and Receiving Help**

Our health and healing practices are integral to our culture. Our healers must be sure that those who need their help are able to use it.

They may sit with us in silence. They may listen without response. They may watch the way we do things.

### **Then they decide how to help.**

To show gratitude to our healers, medicine people, or seers we offer tobacco. At times, people will also give a small gift or provide food.

Today, a gift may be to cover the cost of travel, purchase a needed object, or offer to do home repairs and/or other practical needs.

If a healer has a helper, he/she can assist you in asking for help and making arrangements.

These are some of the standard practices that have survived to this day. Now, we must consider how traditional medicine practices will survive in the future. The nation, communities, people, health and social departments, and heads of programs need to consider investing in our youth so that traditional practices can be restored and so that they can endure. In addition to other endowments, this investment can take the form of internships, scholarships, and/or apprenticeships.

We need to educate ourselves as a nation and work to include traditional medicine in the delivery of health, in social programs, and systems.



## **What is Expected of Our Healers**

Our healers will lead us to a healthier lifestyle, a healthier community, and a healthier nation.

Our healers, with their helpers, will explain their practices to us.

Our healers will use their position of honour and respect to help their people.

Our healers will be positive, supportive, reassuring, and encouraging.

Our healers will never resort to instilling fear, creating negativity, rearing bad thoughts, or causing harm.

Our healers will act with respect, accountability, honesty, humbleness, and humility.

Our healers are our role models.

Our healers are followers of their own advice and students of their own teachings.

Our healers are known as people of peace, wellness, and love.

Our healers will not exercise power and control over their people or advance their own interests.

Our healers have healthy attitudes and conduct.

Our healers are people of clear minds and clean habits.

Our healers maintain confidence and speak positively of others.

Our healers understand we need a safe, secure, and trusting environment to help us maintain ourselves in good health.

**These are our understandings about our health and healing**



## **The Situation in Canada Makes Action More Urgent**

The Canadian Parliament conducted a public review of traditional medicine and made recommendations on how to strike an effective balance between freedom of choice and the safety of consumers. Included in the discussions were herbal medicines, traditional Chinese medicines, Ayurvedic (East Indian) medicines, homeopathic preparations, and vitamin and mineral supplements.

The Canadian concern also included Native American traditional medicine. Applying regulations to Haudenosaunee traditional medicine practices is an intrusion on the jurisdiction of the Haudenosaunee and violates the principles of the Two-Row Wampum.

As Haudenosaunee people, we have similar concerns. We want to know that our traditional healers are competent, that they adhere to high standards, and that there is a mechanism for complaints to be dealt with. However, we have our own traditions, customs, and laws to deal with these matters.

In the 21st century we are concerned about the standards of our medicines, as well as other matters of high priority. Other concerns include:

- How do our traditional healers cover their expenses and maintain their families?
- How do we promote the use of our medical knowledge by our own people when the medical practices of the dominant society are promoted so forcefully?
- How do we ensure our scientific knowledge is not only preserved but also expanded?
- How do we protect ourselves from the misuse of our medicines? How do we protect our traditional healers from unwarranted claims against them?

We have an obligation to assist Canada in protecting our interests, for example, by trying to stop the commercialization of our sacred medicines and practices.



## A Code of Behaviour

As is the case with other professional people, our traditional medicine healers have a primary responsibility to regulate their profession. One example of such self-regulation is a code of professional conduct, which could be adopted by the nation. A draft code has been developed for discussion by the Haudenosaunee. Other nations will take other approaches to self-regulation. This approach is intended only for Haudenosaunee people and Haudenosaunee healers, to be applied through Haudenosaunee jurisdiction, as is our inherent right.

1. As traditional healers, we commit ourselves to working for, and on behalf of, *Sonkwaiatison* (the Creator), for it was *Sonkwaiatison* who appointed certain people and gave them special gifts to assist the healing of our people.
2. As traditional healers, we commit ourselves to understanding the four sacred ceremonies, our responsibilities in each of the four seasons, and the powers of the four directions.
3. As traditional healers, we commit ourselves to developing bonds of trust and respect with other healers. We commit ourselves to working together in the defence and advancement of our cultural heritage and in the enhancement of our knowledge. We renounce division, gossip, and ill will.
4. As traditional healers, we commit ourselves to establishing and maintaining standards of practice for traditional healing.
5. As traditional healers, we commit ourselves to establishing a mechanism for complaints about the failure to adhere to the established standards. This mechanism will allow us to collectively investigate and take appropriate action.
6. As traditional healers, we commit ourselves to following the teachings of *Sonkwaiatison*.
7. As traditional healers, we commit ourselves to using our medicines wisely and respectfully and prohibiting ourselves from selling our medicines or knowledge for commercial purposes or personal gain.
8. As traditional healers, we commit ourselves to protecting, caring for, conserving, and nurturing our medicinal plants.
9. As traditional healers, we commit ourselves to referring our clientele to other healers, doctors, or practitioners whenever we feel another form of care is required.

10. As traditional healers, we commit ourselves to finding and recruiting apprentices, setting high standards for them, and guiding them in becoming traditional healers of high quality.
11. As traditional healers, we commit ourselves to engaging in continuous learning about the wisdom of the Elders, about our traditional medicines, and about traditional knowledge regarding health and healing.
12. As traditional healers, we commit ourselves to act with respect, accountability, honesty, humbleness, and humility.
13. As traditional healers, we commit ourselves to be role models in our lives, to be followers of our own advice, to maintain confidences faithfully and completely, and to speak positively of others.
14. As traditional healers, we commit ourselves to not seek publicity other than the good news passed on to others by our clientele, Elders, and community.
15. As traditional healers, we commit ourselves to speak out collectively if we encounter unqualified persons practicing our traditional methods without the knowledge to do so safely.
16. As traditional healers, we commit ourselves to be fair, honest, and practical for the services we provide. Financial contributions will be based on the means of the individual, family, or community.
17. As traditional healers, we commit ourselves to having a healthy, non-exploitative attitude, particularly with our clients.
18. As traditional healers, we commit ourselves to the knowledge that human beings are more than just flesh and bone, that they have feelings, memories, and spirituality. We commit ourselves to be concerned with the entire person, the interrelationship of mind, body, spirit, and emotion, and the relationship people have with their family or clan, community, and nation, as well as with the Creator and the spirit world.
19. As traditional healers, we commit ourselves to working for, and on behalf of, what is right and good, and to the defence of life. We seek blessings to keep our hearts and minds pure, without evil, hate, or envy.

**We establish this Code of Behaviour and commit ourselves to it as part of our right to health care in accordance with our own practices, customs, knowledge, and medical traditions.**

## **Promoting Our Traditional Health Practices by Using Our Jurisdiction**

Haudenosaunee communities can act to protect traditional medicine without interfering with their healers.

Aboriginal nations in North America have different histories, cultures, practices, medicines, and beliefs. For that reason, laws, codes of ethics, and standards will differ. It is important that Haudenosaunee healers develop their own system. We have attached the following international models as examples and references only.

### **A Code of Ethics for Indigenous Healers: A model from the Amazon**

In the Colombian Amazon, a group of healers who use a medicine called Yagé have formed a Code of Ethics which could be used as the basis for traditional healers of other nations.

#### **Statement of Belief:**

“We consider the medicines to be gifts of the Creator to be used for the benefit of the creatures placed here with them, including human beings. Having received these medicines, we have a duty to protect them and use them wisely.”

#### **Statement of Commitment:**

“We commit ourselves to working in unity for the defense of our traditional medicine and to offer our services for the better health of our nation. Collectively, we have a responsibility to define who is an authentic healer, when an apprentice can begin the learning process and when an apprentice can perform healing.”

To establish their legitimacy, the Amazon healers set up their own certification process for traditional healers and apprentices. They said this was necessary to distinguish between real healers and charlatans. They also worked out an agreement on the expectations of teachers for their apprentices, such as dietary restrictions, abstinence, and rules of dignified behaviour.

“We know that all of us have unique ways of working. Each of us has received a different vision from his teachers and knows different ways to make remedies,” the healers said. They understood that they would work in their own special way, but that there would need to be some basic rules about discipline, behaviour, seriousness, and mutual respect.

While they hoped their Statement of Belief, called their Code of Ethics, could be a model for others, they made it clear that they did not intend to speak for anyone else.

The Amazon healers said that, among the general public, two kinds of doubts around their work exist:



1. Scientific researchers do not understand the approach, or conceptual framework, of the healers. Generally, researchers have their prejudices. They do not listen and they do not try to understand. At the same time, the healers believed it was possible to establish understanding through dialogue and respect.
2. Traditional healers are classified as witch doctors or devil worshippers.

The healers acknowledged that there were those whose conduct violated ethical standards. In other words, some people who claimed to be healers were, in fact, charlatans. Such an acknowledgement only lends credence to the argument that traditional healers themselves need to establish standards and codes of ethics.



## Traditional Practitioners of New Zealand's Maori

By 1900, more than a century after European voyagers and traders started visiting New Zealand (bringing with them many changes and diseases), the Maori population declined sharply. During this time the Maori were widely described as a “dying race,” living in poor health conditions. It appeared that the government of the time did not care about this situation.

It was the Maori themselves, directed by their traditional healers or *Tohungas*, who, within the span of two decades, reversed the moribund situation. The Maori, like the Haudenosaunee, have a wellness and holistic view of physical and spiritual well-being. For them, the major deficiency in modern health services is *Taha Wairua* (the spiritual dimension).

In 1908, the New Zealand Parliament passed a law known as the *Tohunga Suppression Act*. Traditional medicine was prohibited and carried a heavy penalty if used. The law even went so far as to prohibit breastfeeding amongst Maori women. Traditional healers were dismissed as crazy witch doctors. Traditional medicine practices were forced underground.

*Maatauranga Maaori* is the “knowledge, comprehension and understanding of everything visible and invisible existing in the universe.” It involves observing, experiencing, studying, and understanding the world from an Indigenous cultural perspective and is often equated with wisdom. In Maori society, the transfer of knowledge has always involved the traditional practitioners and institutions known as *Waanaga*. The *Tohunga* were trained to accurately recall elements of knowledge and to organize them systematically for purposes of further dissemination. Today, there is a renewed interest in obtaining the knowledge held by *Kaumaatua*, or Elders. A part of this knowledge includes Maori values, emphasizing the special relationship that Maori communities have with the natural world.

Recently, the New Zealand government agreed with the Maori that their health and future lies with Maori models of health and traditional healing. Having this recognized by the entire health system in New Zealand is a major government objective. The Ministry of Health has begun working with traditional healers to support Maori traditional healing practices within the health and disability sector.

*Whare tapa wha* model of health widely accepted by the Maori. The four cornerstones (or sides) of Maori health are *wha-nau* (family health), *tinana* (physical health), *hinengaro* (mental health) and *wairua* (spiritual health).

Traditional healing includes *mirimiri* (massage), *rongoa* (herbal treatments), and *karakia* (spiritual prayer). Traditional healers incorporate the spiritual dimension in assessment and therapy and do so in a culturally relevant way. There are healing teas and hundreds of herbal remedies.

For a number of years, the Ministry of Health has been in dialogue with traditional healers, Maori health providers, and communities regarding the role of traditional healing in relation to mainstream services.

*Nga- Ringa Whakahaere O Te Iwi Ma-ori*, the National Organization of Traditional Maori Healers, advocates on behalf of traditional healers and promotes the wide use of herbal treatments and traditional healing. They believe that traditional healing services should be a part of the public health system but controlled by Maori healers. The organization has joined with the Ministry of Health to examine such questions as:

- How can traditional health systems contribute to better health?
- How can the processes enhance service quality and delivery?
- How should traditional healing services be funded?
- How should intellectual and cultural property rights regarding *rongoa* be protected?

### **Maori Standards of Practice (Developed in 1999)**

- *Tohunga Puna Ora* will ensure that assessment is performed in a way that is relevant to the needs of the *māuiui*.
- *Tohunga Puna Ora* will ensure that the diagnosis, assessment and treatment of *māuiui* are in accordance with *tikanga Māori*, are culturally safe and recognize the needs of *māuiui*.
- *Tohunga Puna Ora* will co-operate with other *Tohunga Puna Ora* and health professionals, as appropriate, to best serve the wishes and needs of the *māuiui*.
- *Tohunga Puna Ora* will ensure that all *māuiui* are aware of any follow-up treatment or consultation required.
- *Tohunga Puna Ora* will ensure that (where appropriate) *māuiui* are referred to other appropriate services, particularly if they have any emergency and/or acute needs.
- The participation of *whanau* in care is facilitated.
- *Māuiui* will be given the information needed in order to give informed consent to ongoing care activities.
- Services provided to *māuiui* should be within the scope of the *Whare Oranga*. Where the needs of the *māuiui* change, or move outside the scope of the *Whare Oranga* services, appropriate arrangements should be made to refer, and/or seek support from other service providers.

When *māuiui* are referred to other service providers, the referral process must ensure that:

- *Māuiui* have informed choice.
- The service(s) to which the *māuiui* is referred is appropriate to each *māuiui*.
- Provision is made for the review of any referral should this be requested.
- Provision is made for effective co-ordination of services where a *māuiui* or whanau requires the services of a number of organizations.
- Policies, procedures, and resources are consistent with effective referral processes.

The *Medicines Act 1981* and the *Medicines Regulations 1984* control all medicines and related products, homeopathic medicines and herbal remedies. Only medicines, medical devices, and related products can be advertised as having a therapeutic purpose. All medicines and related products require the consent of the Minister of Health before they can be distributed in New Zealand. *Rakau Rongoā* (herbal remedy) does not require the consent of the Minister of Health before it can be distributed, provided that:

- It does not contain a scheduled medicine (i.e., a prescription medicine, a restricted medicine, or a pharmacy-only medicine).
- It is a simple product made from plant material that has been crushed, dried, or similarly processed, and mixed with water, ethyl alcohol, or an inert substance.
- It is labeled only with the name of the plant(s) from which it is made and the process to which the plant has been subjected. No written recommendations as to its use are permitted (i.e., therapeutic claims or advertising).

It is recommended that *Whare Oranga* consider these points when they are preparing, labeling, and dispensing their *rongoā*.



## Maori Terminology

New Zealand health practitioners now use Maori terminology routinely. The following are examples of Maori terms.

*Karakia*: Incantation or prayers.

*Kai-awhina*: Assistants or co-workers/helpers.

*Kotahitanga*: Unity/Oneness—working together to achieve the same aim.

*Manaakitanga*: Showing respect/an act of kindness.

*Māuiui*: Persons who are sick or experience ill health, a patient.

*Rāhui*: A mark to warn people against trespassing; used in the case of tapu, or for temporary protection of natural resources. A decision to restrict a particular activity.

*Rakau Rongoā*: A natural medicinal derivative from native plant/s.

*Rangatiratanga*: Self-determination—the right to decide how services are delivered while recognizing tribal/hapū diversities.

*Rongoā*: Traditional Maori healing practices, including medicines or remedies.

*Tapu*: A sacred condition affecting persons, places, and things, and arising from innumerable causes.

*Tikanga*: Patterns of appropriate behavior including customs and rites. Tikanga encompasses amongst other things karakia, tapu rāhui, rangatiratanga, kotahitanga, wairuatanga, manaakitanga.

*Tohunga Puna Ora*: Traditional Maori Healing Practitioners.

*Wairuatanga*: Spirituality.

*Whanau*: Family, including extended family.

*Whare Oranga*: Facility from which Tohunga Puna Ora work; a clinic.

## **A Philippine Model for a Nation's Law on Traditional Healing**

In 1997, the Philippine Congress created the Institute of Traditional and Alternative Health Care with the objective of increasing the development of traditional medicine and establishing a fund to help realize this objective.

There is no reason why the Haudenosaunee, or any other nation, could not do the same. The following discussion uses the Philippine law as a model.

A law might first set out the policy:

“It is hereby declared the policy of the nation is to improve the quality and delivery of health care to the people of the nation through the development of traditional health care and its integration into other health care delivery systems.”

A second policy might be:

“It is also the policy of the nation to set out a legal basis through which the nation establishes ownership of the traditional knowledge. When such knowledge is used by outsiders, the nation can require the permitted users to acknowledge its source and can demand a share of any financial return that may come from its authorized commercial use.”

The law could set out objectives to:

- Encourage traditional healers to do research and develop care systems that improve public health care.
- Promote and advocate the use of traditional health care that is proven to be safe, effective, cost effective, and consistent with high standards of medical practice.
- Encourage senior traditional healers to develop training courses for various forms of traditional care.
- Encourage and assist traditional healers to formulate standards, guidelines, and codes of ethical practice appropriate for the practice of traditional health care.
- Formulate policies for the protection of indigenous health resources and technology from unwarranted exploitation.
- Formulate policies to strengthen the role of traditional health care delivery systems.
- Promote traditional health care in international and national meetings.

The Philippine law defines traditional medicine as “the sum total of knowledge, skills and practices on health care, other than those embodied in biomedicine, used in the prevention, diagnosis and elimination of physical or mental disorder.” It is understood that traditional medicine is not necessarily explicable in the context of a modern, scientific or philosophical framework, but that it is recognized by the people as helping to maintain and improve their health, bringing them closer to the wholeness of their being, as defined by their community, society, culture, history, heritage, and consciousness.



Traditional healers are highly respected persons with a profound knowledge of traditional remedies. These healers collectively, including future generations, have the exclusive rights to access, protect, and control their cultural knowledge and products, including but not limited to, traditional medicines. This right includes the right to receive compensation for their knowledge and services.

It is recommended that the traditional healers establish the National Institute of Traditional Health Care:

- To plan and carry out research and development activities in the areas of traditional health care.
- To organize and develop training programs for physicians, nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists, and other professional health workers and students, as well as scientists, research managers, and extension workers in the field of traditional health care, so that health care providers will understand when to make referrals to traditional practitioners, how to receive patients referred by traditional healers, and the protocols for both.
- To formulate policies for the promotion of healthy living and disease prevention aimed at creating public awareness through educational activities, conventions, seminars, conferences, and the like.
- To co-ordinate a network of traditional health care practitioners.
- To formulate a code of ethics and standards for the practice of traditional health care and to promote voluntary adherence to the code.
- To formulate standards and guidelines for various traditional materials and practices.
- To co-ordinate with traditional healers of other nations.
- To adopt rules, regulations, guidelines, and the like, to be adopted by individual healers.

The law could provide that a Board of Trustees, made up of healers and others, conducts the business of the Institute.



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