

**STR8 UP - A History:
From Despair to Hope**



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Exhibit: National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls		
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STR8 UP A History: From Despair to Hope

In the mid 1990s, the phenomenon of street gangs became a quiet but increasing reality in Saskatoon. Gang recruitment on the street and within the provincial jail became rampant. The coordinating chaplain at the Saskatoon Correctional Center (SCC) at the time introduced a two-pronged program within the Center to address this growing reality. Inmates who qualified for Temporary Absences (TAs), and expressed positive attitudes and values would volunteer to participate in speaking engagements, workshops and presentations in schools, treatment centers and for various youth groups and community organizations. The presentations were centered around these inmates' experiences. The second part of this program was the involvement of inmates who did not qualify for TAs but were potential speakers and participants, and who were willing to assist the chaplain in welcoming groups of people or organizations wishing to visit SCC.

In the fall of 2002, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indigenous Nations (FSIN), formerly the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, approached the chaplain for names of inmates or ex-offenders who were gang members but who questioned their ongoing membership within their gang. The FSIN started recruiting those from this group willing to assist the FSIN Gang Strategy Committee to plan and organize a one-week summer camp for First Nation at-risk of being influenced and recruited into embryonic gangs in Saskatoon. At the same time, two gang members, who had both been involved in the program at the SCC, had approached the chaplain and confided their desire to leave their respective gangs. One's partner had been killed by a rival gang and the other had two younger brothers who were following in his footsteps. They were willing to assist the FSIN and thus became the first two individuals to leave their gang and work with the chaplain on the streets of Saskatoon.

STR8 UP was conceived not by foresight, intent or planning, nor by the collaboration of agencies and institutions; but rather at the request, initiative and involvement of active gang members wanting support to abandon an organization that, for them, had become abusive, destructive, dysfunctional and alienating.

This was the beginning of the group of young men and women who would eventually identify themselves as STR8 UP. Since that time, STR8 UP has delivered more than 2,000 presentations, healing and sharing circles and workshops for numerous treatment centers, schools, reserves, churches, educational and community agencies, service providers, provincial and federal prisons and young offender centers. More than 450 individuals have associated themselves with STR8 UP who have abandoned membership in their respective gangs. Many members have attended parenting classes, returned to school or university, enrolled in various trade programs, completed rehabilitation and addiction recovery programs and received counselling and psychiatric assistance.

It was soon observed that these young men and women were developing a sense of their own worth and value whenever they had the opportunity to be of value to others.

STR8 UP members are not just leaders for tomorrow; they have untapped leadership for today. Healthy relationships are based on caring for others rather than manipulating and exploiting them. The pursuit of their personal goals enabled them to discover that, to help themselves, they had to help others. Their search for healthy relationships enabled them to abandon the unhealthy ones, occasionally, even with family members.

Most gang strategies across North America have three approaches to dealing with gangs: PREVENTION, INTERVENTION AND SUPPRESSION. This strategy is true for Saskatoon. Prevention attempts to target pre-gang involvement among the city's youth. Accomplished in a variety of ways, this is believed to be the most effective, long-term approach to deal with gangs. Intervention assists gang members who are considering leaving or are at the stage of leaving their gang. Intervention is meant to be present and an on-going support in their decision to leave. STR8 UP's intervention is primarily accomplished by being involved in prevention. Finally, there is suppression, which targets hardcore, active gang members responsible for much of the criminal activities within our inner cities. Our current need and preoccupation with suppression means most of our resources are directed toward this effort. Police, courts, incarceration, probation and parole are the primary means for the suppression of gangs and their activities. The majority of financial and human resources are dedicated to suppression.

STR8 UP: OUR MISSION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Mission statement: *STR8 UP assists young men and women to master their own destiny in liberating themselves from gangs and criminal lifestyles.*

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

In STR8 UP, we reject the labels "good" and "bad." While members' behavior may be labeled as such, they themselves and the realities that have led to their addictions and dysfunctionality require a different interpretation. We believe some individuals are on a life journey that is positive and healthy, while others are on a journey that is a painful disease, both of which find their origin possibly at conception. These latter people are too often labelled, judged, condemned and punished. Yet, these individuals are called to healing, recovery and wellness.

The healing of individuals and groups go hand in hand. The focus of STR8 UP is about relationships. Young people who are often mistreated, abandoned and rejected enter a shattered world – not one of respect, acceptance, honesty, humility and cooperation but one of violence and general dysfunctionality. Their medication for these are their various addictions; and one of the basic characteristics of addiction is isolation from oneself and from others, and from one's Sacred Mystery. They alone enter into this journey, but they cannot enter it alone.

The journey must begin where members find themselves, not from where they wish to be or where someone else wishes them to be. Healing is a process, not an event. Addicts are locked into their addiction, not only by their hurting past but also by their hopeless view of the future. By being free to control their own journey and not have impossible expectations placed on them or be controlled by others, their goals become realistic and attainable. They are not set up for failure but rather discover a willingness to enter into this journey with courage and hope.

1. This journey of healing is a long and difficult process. It is a journey of 10,000 little steps with every little step a success. Members' sense of hopelessness dissipates as focus is placed on the progress and success of each member.
2. STR8 UP is a SPIRITUAL BASED PROGRAM. Some members are mainstream or born-again Christians, some are atheists or agnostics. Many are strongly committed to Indigenous culture, traditions and ceremonies. STR8 UP believes that every human being is a spiritual person. Is our spirituality positive and life-giving or is it negative, self-destructive and alienating? Our members realize their recovery is dependent on a positive spiritual life. Recovery is first of all a search for honesty, truth speaking and thinking; the arch foe of honesty is denial and deceit. The second spiritual reality is that of humility; the opposite is arrogance. Members must remove themselves from being the center of the universe and drop the street attitude that they are able to do anything they want to anybody they want whenever and however they want.
3. To begin this journey, it is necessary to possess a VISION of new changes and possibilities. For our members, this vision is the possibility of becoming a LOVING PARENT, a FAITHFUL PARTNER and a RESPONSIBLE CITIZEN. These are true possibilities well within their grasp. Through the shadow of their past they are able to grasp the present and achieve their dreams for tomorrow.

Some of these guiding principles are not quick solutions or certainties. They guide the vision of STR8 UP's members in their healing and sacred journey; as well, the guiding principles support one another, the activities they facilitate and how they engage in prevention and intervention.

HEALING MODEL

The STR8 UP healing model is the INDIGENOUS MEDICINE WHEEL, which teaches us that as human beings we need to nurture, develop and sustain the four aspects of our nature. Individually and collectively we need to strive to be as healthy as possible, PHYSICALLY, EMOTIONALLY, MENTALLY and SPIRITUALLY. STR8 UP members have not been able to nurture these four aspects. Many, if not all, have experienced abandonment, abuse, violence and racism, which have been pervasive in their lives. They have not chosen this lifestyle. Children are not born with a gun or a knife in their hand. They don't go from being a good kid one day to being a street gangster the next. Using the Medicine Wheel model, we can identify the benefits of a healthy pregnancy and a wholesome childhood upbringing; as well, the debilitating damages of a pain-filled pregnancy and an abusive, shattered childhood. The physical, mental, emotional and spiritual consequences of both experiences are imprinted in similar depth and reality. The Medicine Wheel becomes the model for a healthy transformation from pain, sickness, abandonment and victimization to one of self-respect, acceptance, wholesomeness and wellness. It becomes the model through which STR8 UP members are able to identify the vision, the necessary steps, and the strength and courage required throughout their healing journey.

MEMBER PROFILE

STR8 UP works with individuals and families from many backgrounds, however, the majority are from Indigenous or Métis descent and from cities and communities across the three prairie provinces.

- Many have not completed high school and have limited work experience. They reside in areas with a high rate of poverty, drug use and gang activity;
- Many have grown up in households, foster care or families characterized by violence, abuse and other dysfunctions and have come to understand these behaviors as normal;
- Some struggle with mental health issues such as PTSD, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, FASD, ADHD, and more. Others have health issues such as Hepatitis C, HIV, and/or long-term complications from violence and drug use;
- Most have experienced malnutrition, family breakdown and are products of dysfunctional families and parents;
- All have been in the young offender system, adult correctional or federal penitentiary system;
- Most have extremely low or no self-esteem, having experienced rejection, racism and bullying;
- All have become a member of a street gang in order to meet and find the belonging, family and identity they never or seldom had.

BUT

- They are proud individuals – proud of their people, their culture and their identity;
- They are loyal to friends and family. They have dreams, goals and hopes. They have boundless courage, strength and stamina;
- They possess strong values, such as being generous and respectful towards Elders and children;
- They have a strong sense of humor that's always present and contagious. They are not judgmental toward others, not condemning, labelling or shaming.
- They recognize and admit their faults and weaknesses and work hard to overcome them. They work hard to overcome the challenges they face to change their lives, recognizing that healing is a difficult journey;
- Gang life has made them strong, bold and resilient, with the ability to accept the challenges they face;
- Members actively support one another by building a community of individuals, working at changing their lives together.

What is their MOTIVATION for leaving their gang?

- They have seen too many of their friends and relatives be shot, stabbed, commit suicide, over-dose or die in car accidents. They themselves have been stabbed, shot or had various other violent experiences;
- Having joined their gang at a young age and now in their early 20s, they are sick and tired of being sick and tired. Tired of jails and police, tired of conflicts despair and violence, tired of an empty and futile life. They are searching for something better;
- They are now moms and dads, have a partner and a family. They do not wish for their sons and daughters to be brought up in the same manner they were;
- Many wish to give back to their community what they took from it. They wish to be a positive presence rather than the negative one that characterized their gang life.

Let me quote from one of their autobiographies:

"For some of us, our primary objectives were to sell drugs to pay our bills. Those drugs destroyed lives and families. Children were going without food. Kids quit school because they wanted to be like us, with wads of money vehicles, jewelry and clothes. They're another generation of drug dealers, addicts and killers. They've thrown away their future because of gangsters like us. I can't live with that guilt any more. Not only do other kids lose, our own kids go without the essentials of life when we go to jail. Our girlfriends and wives, who have become addicts don't look out after our kids."

And from another:

"All this pain that I carry, the pain of my violent childhood, the pain of all the isolation and years behind bars, the pain of missing my children and being a part of their life, the pain of losing my street brothers to the penitentiary or death, the pain to my family and parents... all this pain won't be for naught if I can save the life of one child. I can never repair the damage done by my actions, but with STR8 UP I can use the rest of my life and my story to help stop the damage."

STR8 UP does not actively recruit, promote or advertise itself to active gang members, nor is it at war with gangs. Many STR8 UP members have family still active in gangs: parents, brothers and sisters, their own sons and daughters and many relatives. They are still caught up in the lifestyle, criminal activities and addictions. We expect that when one becomes a STR8 UP member he or she accepts other members as peers and equals. They must be ready to shake hands with all other members regardless of the rivalry and conflicts that may have occurred in the past. This requires a major change in behavior and attitude. STR8 UP expects total transformation and abandonment of violence and conflict. This transformation is also all about themselves. Members are not expected or asked to share or inform police of past activities with gangs, or provide names of individuals involved in their past gang life. Any disclosure of this type would endanger not only themselves but other members as well.

STR8 UP: THE CONDITIONS

When an individual makes a request to become a member, the first requirement is that they disclose their past silence. The gangster code is one that says: Don't talk, don't trust, don't feel. STR8 UP rejects this code and asks the potential member to talk, trust and feel. We request a short autobiography from the individual in their own words that details their life from conception to today. This autobiography is the beginning of a lengthy and difficult journey of healing. It is an empowering exercise that allows them to believe in their capacity to effect change in the pursuit of their goals. It is not meant for the STR8 UP leadership to know the life of the new member. It is for the author to begin a reflection, revealing in a safe environment where he or she can share safely and openly. They are given the possibility of a new beginning and a relationship of respect, trust, caring and openness. They review and update this autobiography as the healing journey progresses. The learned helplessness of the past slowly evolves into a safe and livelier place, in which they eventually move to respect and forgiveness for themselves, reaching out for a strong sense of self-esteem and self-pride.

Following the autobiography, we present and discuss the following FIVE CONDITIONS with the prospective member:

1. They must DROP THEIR COLOURS if they have not already done so. Every gang has a color and each gang might have a different process or required procedure when one informs their higher ups (gang leaders) of their decision to leave the gang. This might be a beating or to fulfill a mission. Depending on the circumstances, they may be able to simply walk away.
2. They must address their ADDICTION. Every gang member struggles with one or more addiction. STR8 UP strongly encourages individuals to deal with their addictions by accessing treatment, attending cultural ceremonies, counselling, attending Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings on a regular basis or other recovery programs of their choice. It is essential they identify a parallel healing support beyond STR8 UP. They alone must do this, but they can't do it alone.
3. They must work at being HONEST. Gang members have lived a life full of lies, manipulation and dishonesty. Step one of the AA Program's first two words are "To admit." STR8 UP members are expected to be truthful when they share their life stories in public STR8 UP presentations and workshops. We also expect they will be truthful when questioned by the police. They are not asked to disclose everything about themselves but that everything they disclose be truthful.

4. They must learn to be HUMBLE. Members have to abandon the street attitude of "I can do anything I want, to anybody I want, whenever I want, however I want." This attitude of arrogance must give way to the belief that "I am not better or lesser than anyone. We are all equal. We are all different, and that is a gift to each one of us." We must therefore respect one another humbly and truthfully. Healing is not only an individual's journey but a journey of positive relationships.

5. They must be willing to dedicate FOUR YEARS of their healing journey to STR8 UP. Professionals and service providers assisting former gang members in their recovery process must appreciate the fact that this recovery is a long and slow process; it is not an event. We chose four because it is a symbolic number for Indigenous peoples – Four quadrants in the medicine wheel, four directions and so forth. Most STR8 UP members who have fully recovered have devoted up to seven and eight years of their life to this journey.

THE GOALS AND VISION OF STR8 UP

STR8 UP suggests three major goals or visions for new STR8 UP members:

1. Be a LOVING PARENT. Most STR8 UP members are moms and dads. However, when gang banging, their gang and their drugs came first and they were too often not involved in their children's lives; if they were, it was often negative involvement. Parents cannot give to their children what they never learned. They cannot manifest what they have never experienced. Rather, they will pass on what they have learned and experienced. The effort they put in to be moms and dads becomes a discovery of new ways of thinking, feeling, doing and believing in one's abilities to have a healthy relationship with one's children.
2. Be a FAITHFUL PARTNER. We expect members to create and maintain a healthy and respectful relationship with their partners. Their past relationships were often dysfunctional, violent and promiscuous. For many, a complete transformation, a rebuilding and a reconceiving of their concepts of relationships and faithfulness becomes necessary.
3. Be a RESPONSIBLE CITIZEN. Members must define what this means for themselves and the community in which they reside. This involves the belief that it is possible to be sober, to obtain a trade or an education. It is possible to obtain full-time employment and pay your bills.

THE FOUR PHASES IN RECOVERY

STR8 UP suggests there are FOUR PHASES involved in an active member's decision to leave one's gang and enter into the healing process. These are not events. To mend or heal their lives, members need to understand when, where, how and why their lives are broken; only then may they succeed in this arduous journey.

1. The DECISION-MAKING PHASE. This phase can last one day to many years. Often serious thinking begins while members are incarcerated. Sobriety and time enables the realization of the negativity of gang membership and the control it has over its members. The individual undergoes numerous inner struggles, which include some of the following:

- Feelings of fear, loneliness, insecurity, anger and regret;
- Fear of losing friends, of being labelled as a "rat" or a "snitch," of losing their identity: "This is all I know;"
- A loss of the excitement of waring and games;
- Unsure of how to deal with the addictions;
- Fear of how they will obtain money.

Yet the desire to leave remains. Eventually a decision is made, higher-ups are informed, and STR8 UP is approached. Discussions follow, an autobiography is requested. The decision becomes firm.

2. The TRANSITION PHASE. This phase presents an extremely difficult time for the individual. One might have to deal with rival gang members or even with previous gang members angry at the betrayal of one of their own. It contains some of the following:

- Isolation and loneliness remain. Fear, anxiety, stress and conflicts are every day possibilities;
- Addiction and sobriety are a daily struggle. Detox, treatment centers and AA are important options;
- There are still courts to attend and conditions to follow, such as reporting to Parole or Probation Officers; police and service providers doubt their sincerity. STR8 UP often becomes their main support.

The Transition phase, as difficult as it may seem, is possible when they recognize their need for assistance and is facilitated when they reach out for the same.

THE FOUR PHASES IN RECOVERY (con't)

4. The TRANSFORMATION PHASE. They now have accepted new responsibilities and new relationships, yet the old habits, mainly addictions and dysfunctional behaviors, are a major challenge.

- All government ID forms have been obtained. Courts, conditions, reporting have all likely been dealt with;
- Family stability with children and partners has greatly improved. Counselling and parenting classes are still required;
- Maintaining activities with AA, Elders and ceremonies have greatly improved. So has attendance at school; some may be acquiring a trade or have even obtained full-time employment.
- They are fully involved with STR8 UP programs and activities;
- They are dealing with many new emotions, such as regret and remorse. They realize they are no longer victims but victors. They are more comfortable living with values such as honesty, humility, loyalty and hope.

There are still many challenges, obstacles and setbacks to overcome. Nevertheless, their numerous successes provide them with the impetus to never give up.

5. The STABILIZING PHASE. They have acquired new skills, both lifestyle and for employment; they have completed their schooling, some even University. They have discovered sober friends and reconnected with healthy family members. It has not and is still not easy. Their lives have given way to being "solid, down, tough and mean" to doing the right thing because it is the right thing to do. They have discovered the positive results of honest work and honest money.

- They pay their bills, have obtained a driver's license and purchased a vehicle;
- Their personal health – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual – have all improved;
- They have residential stability and positive involvement within their community;
- They have reinforced values such as honesty, commitment, courage, humility and more.

Full stabilization is never 100 per cent guaranteed. In spite of all good intentions, the human condition is such that mistakes are made and often repeated; progress is always a process. We learn from our mistakes and we learn from one another. Thus, healing and advancement can last a lifetime.

THE FOUR PILLARS OF SUCCESS

These four pillars include training and support for STR8 UP members:

1. Outreach, both while incarcerated and in the community
2. Personal Healing
3. Professional Development
4. Community Education

The Outreach Program attempts to meet the specific member's individual needs. It includes advocating in courts and with lawyers, providing necessary counselling, ensuring access to regular healing and sharing circles (both for inmates and those in the community), providing programs that focus on trauma, abuse violence prevention, and more.

Personal healing provides the necessary tools and skills needed help members bring about positive change in self, family and community. Healing programs are effective when they are tailored to unique experiences and requirements of the individual. These include anger management, establishing boundaries, developing healthy relationships and others. Healing includes dealing with mental issues, depression, PTSD, addictions, etc. It also includes encouraging Indigenous members to heal through traditional approaches such as sweat ceremonies, sharing circles and smudging.

Professional development helps members become more acquainted with work related hard and soft skills to improve their overall chance of employment and education. These include tickets and certificates as well as essential skills such as time-management, financial management, effective team work, conflict resolution and creating placement opportunities with various business partners.

Community education helps our members to engage with the community and educate the public about the effects of poverty, gangs, trauma, alienation, racism and addictions within their lives. STR8 UP has developed a one-and-a-half-hour presentation constructed on the holistic teachings of the Medicine Wheel. It includes the history of the members' youth and their journey of recovery and rehabilitation and allows these ex-street gang members to share their criminal and incarceration experiences. These presentations focus on the individual's self-empowerment and motivation in achieving a healthy transformation. In addition to giving presentations, members have appeared in numerous newspaper articles, on radio talk shows and in other media to help show the impact STR8 UP is having within the community.

Along with the four pillars is a program called Moving Forward, which is a daily, comprehensive education and training program that lasts four months per session. Ten members can be enrolled at any given time. STR8 UP is also presently developing a Provincial Gang Strategy with the assistance of both the Federal and Provincial Ministries of Justice and Corrections.

STR8 UP ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Literature

STR8 UP and its members have, together, written a number of books. The first book, *STR8 UP and Gangs, The Untold Stories*, contains the true-life stories of thirteen young men, who have chosen to share their hearts, pain, hopes and successes to reach at-risk youth before they become involved in gang life. In doing so, these members not only reach the youth they seek to help but they educate the general public about gangs while empowering themselves. They describe their childhood experiences of abuse, violence and addictions, which ultimately were gateways to their membership and activities within their various gangs.

This first book also covers STR8 UP's history, objectives, procedures, philosophy and activities.

A second workbook, *STR8 UP, Stories of Courage*, a follow-up to the first book, highlights the journeys of recovering gang members. It discloses the sweat and tears, the struggles, the successes and the courage required, first, to enter into a healing journey and, second, to remain in it for as long as it takes. Section one presents the healing journeys of several men and women authors. Each individual describes how they were empowered to determine for themselves a modicum of personal restoration, recovery and transformation; this section contains various themes, topics and issues. The authors describe their healing process, their opportunities to move into wellness, each according to their personal experience, dysfunction and various challenges.

In section two of this workbook, different authors select and describe the knowledge and awareness they found through exploring their experiences with suicide, abandonment, grief or addictions. They share their healing journey within that context. Transformation is not possible without recovery; recovery is not possible without looking profoundly at the roots of the addictions. These grow out of the soil of our lives, the soil of each person's reality.

Section three contains poems written by several recovering STR8 UP members.

Section four looks at the bigger picture. Its intent is to find ways to change the conditions people grow up in that put them in situations where they feel they have no choice but to live dangerous and unhealthy lifestyles. While this section was created for service workers in mind it is beneficial for everyone.

Videos

Several videos have been produced featuring members sharing their stories to educate youth and those wanting to know "how come" these individuals have joined a gang to later decide to leave that gang.

In one video, members sing a song they wrote, asking the question: "Where are the mothers?"

Art

An art display of poetry, visuals and short stories dealing with dads incarcerated and the consequences of how this affected their children was featured at SCYAP Art Centre in fall 2017. The exhibit was entitled, "Dads Behind Bars," a project featuring the work of STR8 UP members created while incarcerated in the Saskatoon Correctional Center.

Social Enterprise

In 2017, STR8 UP started STR8 UP Works, a social enterprise that provides STR8 UP members with an opportunity to participate in transitional employment. All profits from STR8 UP Works help cover the costs of running personal development and healing programming, outreach support and more.

Non-Profit and Charitable Status Number

STR8 UP established its Board of Directors in 2013 and, soon after, STR8 UP became a registered non-profit organization, receiving its registered charitable status number in 2014.

CONCLUSION

STR8 UP is all about relationships:

Where control and authority gives way to cooperation and collaboration;

Where discussion and exchange replace threats and obligations;

Where reflection and analysis precede ideology and certitude.

There are many paths towards healing, recovery, transformation and conversion. For some, it begins with their Creator, Higher Power, God or Sacred Mystery, but it also includes storytelling, music, art, dance, poetry, songs, talking and healing circles. STR8 UP does not impose the ONE path towards healing. Our members have to reach a maturity and clarity of their issues. They ask for understanding, empathy, support and consistency for STR8 UP's participation in their recovery. It is not hierarchical. There should be little to distinguish the healer and the person in the process of healing.

STR8 UP has the utmost respect for Indigenous Nations. First Nation Elders and young people are ready, able and willing to engage culturally and spiritually in the healing of their own people. For them, it is first a separation of the person from their actions and behaviors. Every person is gifted with the potential to be creative, peace-filled, harmonious and liberated. "How can one be called bad, evil, cruel and then be expected to be good, righteous and compassionate?"

STR8 UP strongly promotes the belief that healthy spiritual awareness and growth is possible for every human being. It is the claiming of a complete and full humanity. This discovery can appear every day of our lives, at every moment of our lives. Compassion, forgiveness and empathy for ourselves supports compassion, forgiveness and empathy for others.

"If I know myself, who I am, then I will be able to know you, who you are."

This is what motivates STR8 UP members to discover the mysteries of the Indigenous Medicine Wheel.

Grateful are the abandoned. Grateful are the downtrodden. Grateful are the abused. Grateful are the alienated. They all have a story to tell.

Indian Princess

Indian princess, you look beautiful in your jingle dress
You take my mind back to the old days
To when we listened to our Elders, and followed the old ways
To when we pounded the drums to Mother Earth's heartbeat
Instead of losing our people to life on the streets
Before the system failed us and we fell between the cracks
Before they took our language and never gave it back
Before our lives revolved around using alcohol and drugs
When our kids were kids, not gangsters and thugs
When being a man meant protecting the tribe
Not beating his wife and getting drunk or high

Indian princess, we were meant for more than this
More than dying of Aids or Hepatitis
More than being just numbers and statistics
But Indian princess, It's not too late
To save our children and change our fate
But first, we must let go of the pain and let go of the hate
We must move on and forgive the wrongs
And teach our children that being tough does not mean being strong
That strength comes from the good inside
And they must use that good to protect the tribe

Nicholas Giroux