



From Fragmentation to Wholeness: Containers for Healing

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Abstract:

Psychological and social fragmentation in many forms confronts us daily. Using a framework of holistic education and Indigenous holism, I propose a pedagogy of repair to facilitate healing and wholeness. The metaphor of container is used to investigate how to transform fragmented parts of the self or of society and lead the fragments towards wholeness by facilitating transformational encounters with ourselves, with others, and with the world. Metaphorical containers are not necessarily physical spaces, but are created by relationships, by ritual, by art-making and by other means. A felt-sense-informed, arts-based inquiry elucidates characteristics of effective containers. An Indigenous model of healing and justice, an alternative prison in the province of British Columbia, serves as a poignant example of an effective healing container.

Keywords: holistic education; arts-based inquiry; healing; container as metaphor; containers for healing

Fragmentation takes many forms. Educators may encounter psychological and social fragmentation in traumatized students, gang rivalry, violence, mental health problems, political polarization, racism, or the effects of the global refugee crises. The opposite of fragmentation is integration, and both psychological integration and social connection are correlated with well-being (McGilchrist, 2012; Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & Pfefferbaum, 2008; Siegel, 2010). In this paper, I ask, “How can we heal the results of fragmentation and create more interrelatedness? What can we do with the fragments”? I propose a pedagogy of repair, within the framework of holistic education, which aims at healing fragmentation. I will use art to explore notions of fragmentation and wholeness, and to provide a “felt sense” (Gendlin, 1965, 1982), experience to the reader of the wholeness possible with effective metaphorical containers. In addition to introducing containers that facilitate emergence of wholeness, an additional aim of this article is to inspire the use of creative arts to explore issues that concern us.

Situating Pedagogy of Repair within Holistic Education

Holistic education, situated in a wider trend towards holism, has focused on integrating emotional and spiritual aspects into the classroom to educate the whole person, and to counter the trend in education of privileging the cultivation of the rational or intellectual (Miller, 2005). More broadly, holistic education strives towards wholeness by making many kinds of connections—between mind and body, between self and community, with the earth, and with our deeper selves as well as amongst disciplines (Miller, 2007). To address the rampant fragmentation of these times, some educators take this further; they adopt an implicit pedagogy of repair by consciously creating opportunities for healing. Bai, Morgan, Scott, and Cohen (in press), for example, advocate for “education that heals” (p. 3) to restore wholeness. “We make the case here that healing has to be not only part of but an important and central part of teaching in today’s world that is sustaining significant suffering and damage” (p. 5).

The idea of *repair* is often used in psychotherapy to describe the healing of attachment injuries and disruptions (Schore, 2014). Repair implies that connections are being built, or re-built. Even if the original disruption occurred in childhood, the repair can occur in present time relationships. Thus, a pedagogy of repair is guided by a motivation to heal the painful effects of different forms of fragmentation—intra-psychic, social, and with the other-than-human world. It heals by attuning to, and providing the conditions that facilitate wholeness, specifically by providing an effective container.

Contributions of Indigenous Perspectives and Gendlin’s Work to Wholeness

Many Indigenous educators also highlight the importance of interconnectedness and wholeness (Battiste, 2013; Cajete, 1994; Curwen Doige, 2003; Ermine, 1995; Morcom, 2017). Morcom (2017) describes how holism informs Indigenous educational philosophy, and Indigenous philosophy in general, by viewing the individual as encompassing emotional, cognitive, spiritual and physical aspects; by highlighting relationships between people, communities, and with the rest of the living

and nonliving world, including the divine; by integrating disciplines of knowledge rather than compartmentalizing; and by honouring subjectivity. An Indigenous “all my relations” ethic that recognizes the interrelatedness of all things maintains harmony because interdependence requires us to act responsibly (Absolon, 2010). Cajete (1994) highlights the effect of imbalance in relationships when he describes illness as “directly associated with a disharmony” (p. 106). This disharmony can come from “improper relationship to the natural world, to the spiritual world, to the community, and/or to one’s own spirit and soul” (p. 107). Wholeness, then, comes from proper relationships, a theme I will return to later.

Felt sense is a term coined by Eugene Gendlin (1965, 1982), a philosopher and psychologist at the University of Chicago, who developed a philosophy of the implicit which investigates how meaning is formed in the interaction between felt experiencing and logical expression, and a method of psychotherapy called *focusing*. The felt sense contains felt meaning and emerges from body knowing, which is just outside of verbal thought. When people wake from a dream and are left with the sensation of the dream but no explicit memory, they are experiencing a felt sense. Some other ways the felt sense has been described are “unformulated experience”, “pre-reflective unconscious”, “embodied knowing”, “the unthought known”, and “the edge of awareness” (Preston, 2008, p. 348). Focusing is a method that helps build a connection between the implicit felt sense that is experienced first, and subsequent explicit verbal expression, between experiencing meaning and logical symbolization (Gendlin, 1965). Most people have a felt sense response to fragmentation: they feel uncomfortable, disjointed and disconnected. This is a subjective experience, which comes from preverbal knowledge. Later in this paper, I will use art to make explicit my implicit subjective wisdom in response to visual representations of fragmentation and wholeness in order to understand what facilitates the transformation from fragmentation to wholeness.

Fragmentation

What is fragmentation? When something is fragmented, a connection has been broken and there is a separation. The word *fragment* means “a small part broken off or separated from something” (fragment, n.d.), and comes from the Latin word *frangere*, “to break” (fragment [def 2], n.d.). Fragmentation is more serious than a disconnection because it cannot merely be reconnected. Relations are broken to such an extent that healing requires something new to arise.

Fragmentation occurs intra-psychically, socially, and in relation to the natural world. As a psychotherapist, I encounter fragmentation in my clients’ psyches, particularly as result of trauma. My clients arrive with parts of themselves fighting with, or disconnected from, other parts. One part wants to be loved and the other pushes people away. Or, they dissociate, haunted by memory fragments and disconnected from their feelings (Wilson, 2007).

Within social relations fragmentation can be interpersonal, intra-group, and intergroup. The Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) documented the fragmenting intergenerational effects of residential schools and the cultural genocide of Indigenous people (TRC, 2015). This collective trauma resulted in lateral violence, addiction, high incarceration rates, and youth suicide

epidemics (Oudshoorn, 2015). In response, the word “reconciliation” itself implies a coming together of fragmented parts. As a facilitator with Reconciliation Canada, I supported its vision to engage “Canadians in dialogue and transformative experiences that revitalize the relationships among Indigenous peoples and all Canadians” (Reconciliation Canada, n.d.), in other words, to heal the effects of fragmentation.

Fragmentation can also be experienced in relationship with the ecosystem. Educators who work in nature-based education attempt to heal students’ disconnection from nature and to prevent the decimation of the natural environment by rekindling their relationship to the other-than-human world (Orr, 1990). If you look around, you will see the fragmentation, and attempts to overcome it, everywhere.

Why is it important to heal fragmentation, or to make whole? Fragmentation leads to an ongoing cycle of suffering and destruction. The majority of those incarcerated in Canada’s prison system have experienced some form of trauma, individual or systemic, such as childhood abuse, racism, or poverty (Oudshoorn, 2015), but a punitive correctional system does not function as a healing container or provide rehabilitation (Gilligan, 2000). Understanding how to heal fragmentation would lead to a more connected, safer, happier society.

I chose to explore healing fragmentation through felt sense and art to address two key fragmentations in the Western world: the mind-body split and the division between the right and left hemispheres of the brain. Psychiatrist Iain McGilchrist (2012) explains that we need both hemispheres to function, but the left hemisphere has taken over in Western culture. The left hemisphere is “biased towards identification by parts” (p. 49) and “abstract categories” (p. 52), whereas the right hemisphere “sees the whole” (p. 46), “in context” (p. 54), is concerned with “the lived world” (p. 56), has “greater integrative power” (p. 47), and is concerned “with the relations between things” (p. 50). This emphasis on left-hemisphere functions has resulted in separation, and the right hemisphere’s integrative capacities need to be accessed to form connections through art, metaphor, felt sense, subjective experience and embodied methods (McGilchrist, 2012). This aligns with the integrative goals of holistic education. It is hoped that this paper with its images and words will help connect the two hemispheres and function as an integrated healing container of inquiry.

An Arts-Based Exploration

As I drew, I mused: I have a relationship with fragmentation. We have been dancing together all my life. It was there when I was born, whispering “holocaust” into my ear. It has come and gone, leaving red glaring scars that I take my scissors and cut around. I cut the scars out, creating new contours to my being. Like a coastline shaped around a boulder even after the boulder dislodges, the new edges of my being are asymmetrical and weird. These ghostlike, hollow pieces of my life shape the stories I tell by their absence and once-were-there-ness. The gaps create shapes that I mould my life around.



Figure 1. Part of original drawing.¹

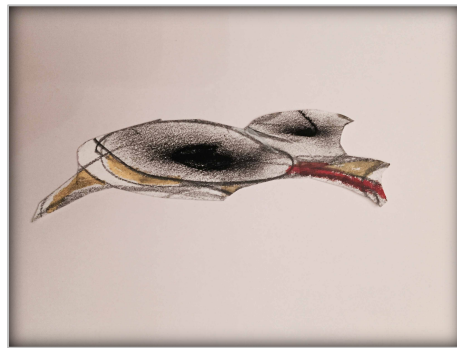


Figure 2. Cutting around the scars: individual fragments.

I looked at the fragments I had created, and I knew that healing fragmentation did not mean the fragments would come back together in their original form. The idea of trying to recreate exactly what was lost seemed like a recipe for anxiety and disappointment. What, then, I asked, should I do with my fragments?



Figure 3. Fragments randomly laid out.

To play with this question, I tried different ways to lay them out and used my felt sense to seek integration. I tried different configurations and still experienced them as disjointed. When I laid them out in an organized manner with space around them, the fragments felt a little less disturbing but did not elicit the felt sense of wholeness or integration I was seeking.



Fig. 4. Fragments with space in between.

At one point I gave up and tried a different tactic to seek a sense of wholeness. Since I was teaching a class on Carl Jung to my counseling students that week, I wondered if wholeness as symbolized by mandalas, could assist me. I tried unifying my fragmented felt sense by drawing a mandala. Interestingly, when I made a mandala using a compass and based on symmetry, all the vitality seemed to drain out of the experience and I could not finish, which did not bring me any closer to the feeling of wholeness.



Fig 5. Symmetrical mandala.

Finally, when I simply drew a circle and randomly placed the fragments into it, I was surprised that it did indeed create a new coherent whole. Containing the fragments in a circle transformed the relationships between them and their environment. They felt connected and held within something larger than themselves. Miller (2005) suggests three basic principles of holistic education: connectedness, inclusion, and balance. Containing the fragments within a circle created exactly that: connection, inclusion and balance.



Fig 6. Fragments in a mandala.

Wholeness

“Heal” and “whole” derive from the same roots (Heal, 2003); healing occurs when something is made whole. Carl Jung knew this when he used mandalas as a symbol of wholeness and unity, and as a method of integrating different parts of the psyche (Jung, 1977). Greg Cajete (1994) also points out that in American Indian Art “the creation of a mandala embodies a therapeutic ritual that honors our impulse toward wholeness through striving toward centering, healing, health, and transformative growth and development” (p. 152). Circles are powerful shapes. When chairs are arranged in a circle in a classroom, the dynamic changes. Talking circles are a powerful healing tool used in Indigenous cultures, restorative justice, and now many classrooms (Pranis, 2005).

Here I need to pause to consider what I am aiming for when working with fragmentation. There are many words that could describe the healing of disconnection, including *wholeness*, *integration*, *harmony*, *unity*, *fluidity*, *connection*, and *reconciliation*. A future exploration can differentiate between them, but for the purposes of this paper, *wholeness* and *integration* are used to capture the felt sense of what it feels like to be connected to oneself and to others.

Daniel Siegel posits that the basis of health is integration, which he defines as the process of differentiating and linking. He says that non-integrated systems—i.e., fragmented systems—tend towards either chaos or rigidity (Siegel, 2010). “To integrate something, you have to differentiate and link” (D. Siegel, personal communication, December 5, 2015). My drawn fragments, before they were put in the circle, were chaotic, while the symmetrical mandala was rigid. Finally, placing pieces in the drawn circle effectively differentiated and linked them, resulting in integration. The relationship between the fragments changed when they were placed in the circle. Additionally, the relationship between the fragments and the container is one of being held, perhaps because the circle recalls the felt experience of being in the womb. Next, I will explore what moves fragmentation to integration, and what types of containers facilitate this movement.

Containers

Containers denote an energetically “held space” that creates an environment conducive to learning or healing. Psychoanalytic theory, building on Donald Winnicott and Wilfred Bion’s ideas about the ideal maternal holding environment needed by infants, draws a parallel to the emotional “holding” and “containing” needed in a psychotherapeutic relationship (Finlay, 2015; Gravell, 1999). Extending this metaphor further, a transformational container takes something that is fragmented, such as the plurality of voices and intentions found in our civic lives, and holds it in order to move it towards harmonious connection or wholeness. However, much depends on the efficacy of the transformational container and its functionality.

To explore this, an exploration of three-dimensional containers is needed, since people are not two-dimensional like a mandala. I searched for additional nourishing containers and started seeing them everywhere. A body is a container for internal organs and for physical experiences. The natural world is a container that has held life for thousands of years, and many people go to nature for grounding. Art is another container that uses colours and shape to give form to expression.

Social relationships also provide containers. A close community can function as a container. Studies on resilience, for example, find that social support after trauma is more important to healing than individual personality traits (Ungar, 2012). In *When Blood and Bones Cry out*, John and Angela Lederach (2010) describe in detail how social containers function:

SAFETY IS CONTAINER [emphasis in original] suggests the idea of feeling surrounded by acceptance and protection, a space where it is possible to be oneself, devoid of threat and to get on with living life without fear. These spatial metaphors point toward a notion of being encircled in the sense of being held, pointing towards notions of container as community and family. (p. 64)

Ceremony can be a container. When Alroy “Bucky” Baker from Squamish Nation blanketed Anthropologist Wade Davis in a cultural ceremony before he spoke at the President’s Dream Colloquium at Simon Fraser University in November 2016, he said that the blanket across his heart will deflect anything coming in and the headband deflects anyone trying to change his mind. Both the blanket and the headband are containers that help hold and contain the speaker’s heart and mind. The classroom, another potentially healing container, is a place where learning is enhanced when students feel connected to others (Hurst, Wallace, & Nixon, 2013).

Fragmentation appears everywhere, and so do containers. People naturally hold themselves with daily rituals, values, routines and connections with others—these can all function as whole-making containers. Processes can be containers. For example, meditation can be a container for self-awareness and calm. Group therapy is a container for emotional healing. Susan Walsh and Heesoon Bai use the metaphor of a cauldron to describe the transformational container formed by their practice of collaborative and contemplative writing (Bai & Walsh, 2017).

Neither wholeness nor containers need be fixed or static. Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers, and Leggo (2009) say the subjective self is “an assemblage of fragments, and identity is fluid” (p. 33). Identities fragment and reassemble in different ways while the subjective self serves as a fluid container. Because fragmentation and the healing of fragmentation are fluid processes, it may be more accurate to use the verbs “containing”, “harmonizing”, “reconciling”, unifying”, “integrating” and “connecting” to describe the process of healing fragments, rather than the nouns.

The types of containers I explored seem to fit into four categories: physical spaces such as a home, a body, or nature; processes with a beginning and end such as meditation, group therapy, or a song; social/interpersonal relationships such as community, culture, and family; and relationships with the other-than-human world including spirituality and nature. Of course, there are overlaps. For example, a hug is a process that involves a physical space (bodies) and relationships with other people. A sweat lodge ceremony involves all four.

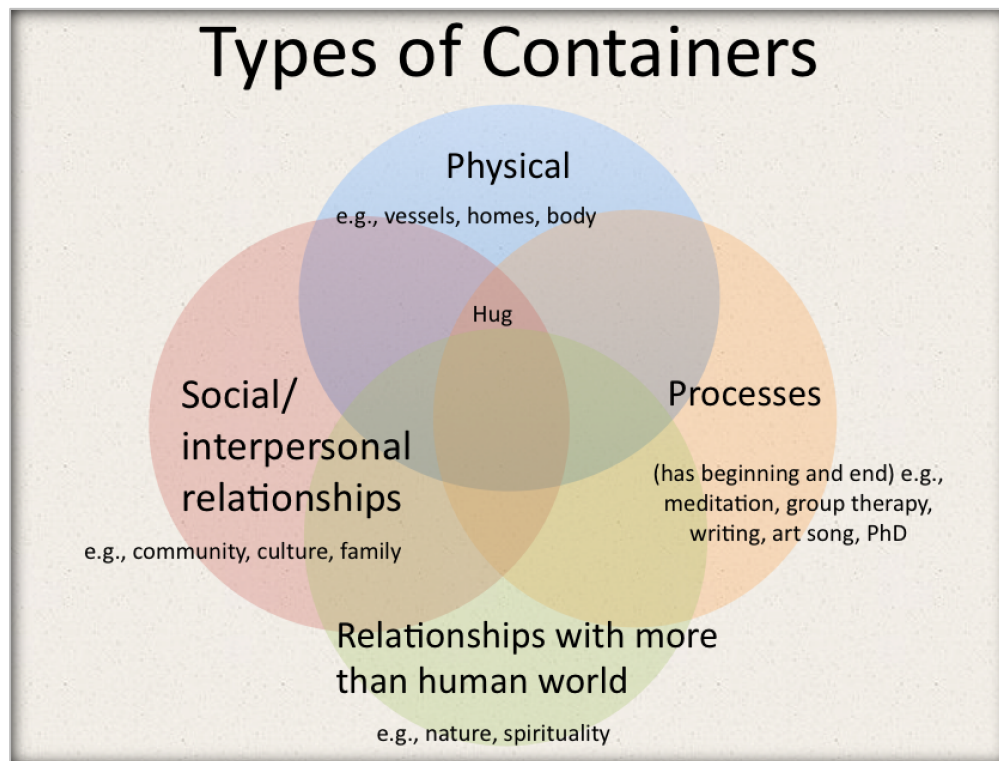


Fig 7. Types of containers.

Effective Containers

What makes a container effective? Natural containers such as lungs and wombs can highlight what effective containers do. Our lungs hold our breath and allow for the transfer of oxygen into our red blood cells and then they let the breath go. A womb holds an unborn child, nourishes her to facilitate transformation, and lets her go. I postulate that an effective container does three things. First, an effective container receives, holds and releases. An ineffective container would either trap us

by holding us too long or would expel us too soon like a punctured lung expels oxygen, or like a miscarriage. Second, an effective container is the right size, rather than being too small or too large. If it is too small, it does not allow us to move and holds us static. If it is too large, it doesn't properly contain. Lederach (2010) explains that in the aftermath of war, a restorative container for community healing and dialogue must be "large enough to create spaces of interaction, yet close enough to be felt and heard" (p. 102). National reconciliation processes often don't reach local communities—the container is too big and people don't feel heard. Third, an effective container provides a place where nourishment or transformation can occur, particularly by changing the relationship between parts, or between the part and the environment. For example, a well-facilitated therapy group creates safety between the participants, who may initially arrive guarded, so that vulnerabilities can be shared. Miller (2007) names transformation as the one that furthers wholeness most, of three types of learning: transmission (of skills or facts), transactional learning (cognitive problem solving and dialogue) and transformation (making personally and socially meaningful connections). Transformation is key in Indigenous education as well: "The Aboriginal approaches to learning are spiritual, holistic, experiential/subjective and transformative. In contrast, mainstream approaches to learning are secular, fragmented, neutral/objective, and seek to discover a definitive truth" (Curwen Doige, p. 147).

Kaleidoscope

A kaleidoscope is a container that takes in fragments and transforms the relationship between them. To further my investigation of creating wholeness with fragments, I made a kaleidoscope. No matter what I put inside—scraps of paper, glass beads, or pharmaceutical pills—the result was beautiful. Within the kaleidoscope, the fragments are reflected and integrated in a way that harmonizes them and creates a felt sense of wholeness. As the fragments reflect and echo each other enough times they become connected and woven together in a communal dance of colour, shape and form.

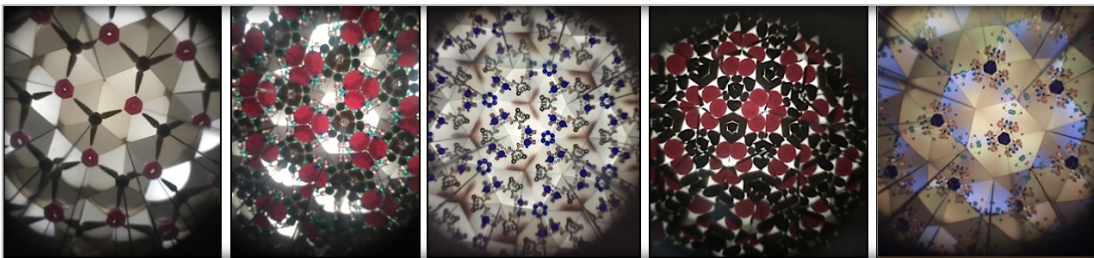


Figure 8. Temporary mandalas from my kaleidoscope.

These are temporary mandalas, the fragments easily shaken into another beautiful pattern, another whole and another whole, not one static, final, integrated whole. With a kaleidoscope, it is impossible not to be whole unless the container is broken. The word Kaleidoscope comes from three Greek words: *Kalos* means "beautiful", *eidos* means "shape", and *skopein* means "observe", which, together mean "observer of beautiful forms" (Kaleidoscope, 2003; -scope, 2003). What makes it beautiful? The reflections.

“Kaleiscoping” can be thought of as an iterative process by which fragments are transformed by reflecting and echoing off each other. Cajete (1994) refers to this process when he describes the transformational nature of Indigenous education as involving “telling and retelling a story from various perspectives and at various stages of life” (p. 213). Lederach (2010) refers to meaningful conversation and voices with powerful action that create vibrations with far-reaching impact as “social echo” (p. 214). Bai and Walsh (2017) describe how, within the container of their collaborative writing process, their words can echo back and forth like an “echo chamber” (p. 252) to deepen intersubjective space. Reflection and echoing, then, may add to harmonizing in effective containers.

Leaving Pieces Out

What if one particular piece doesn’t fit in the container? When I first discovered that putting the fragments into a mandala helped create a sense of unity, one piece was too big and I left it out. It was darker and bigger than the rest, and the circle just couldn’t accommodate it. I tried to justify my actions by telling myself that sometimes pieces of myself are left behind and come together in a new way. These pieces are perhaps not lost altogether, but not fully integrated. I liked the way the fragments fit together in the mandala. My colleague asked, “Is it whole without that piece?” I tucked the question into the back of my mind. But it haunted me; I saw images of people who are marginalized and left out of the conversation. So, I returned to my fragments and struggled with the isolated piece. I put it back into the mix, but it didn’t seem to work. I knew I had to put it in but it wasn’t working on a felt sense level. Horrified, I thought to myself, “is this how people exclude other people?” If it just doesn’t fit, or it’s not convenient, or it feels good without them, is justification used to just leave them out?

Finally, I did what now seems obvious: I drew a new circle, a bigger one. I had to draw a few until I found just the right size. If it was too small, not all the pieces fit, but when it was too big, the biggest piece seemed to dominate. The relationships between the pieces needed to work. It took time to get used to it but soon it actually started feeling empty without the too-large piece and I preferred the final image. In keeping with Miller’s (2005) three basic principles of holistic education—connectedness, inclusion and balance—the principle of inclusion and my felt sense helped me find a way to integrate the pieces harmoniously through finding the right container. My preference for the final configuration over the original drawing aligns with theories of post-traumatic growth that describe and explain the potential for improvement, rather than just recovery, after adversity (Joseph & Linley, 2005; Wilson, 2007).

I continued playing—this time with the quality of the circle. If it was too light it didn’t function as enough of a container, and if it was too dark it felt constricting.



Fig. 9. The boundary: too weak, too strong, and most effective.

I took this further and created multiple circles containing fragments, placing them in relationship to each other, or overlapping them. The possibilities of creative containing now seemed endless. A pedagogy of repair seeks to find the best container to facilitate wholeness with each different set of fragments that is encountered.

Kwikwexwehlp: A Healing Container

Kwikwexwehlp Healing Village is an Aboriginal healing village, a minimum-security prison run by Correctional Service Canada in partnership with Sts'ailes First Nation. All prisons are containers, but they are not necessarily healing containers or effective containers, whether efficacy is assessed by integrative capacity or recidivism rates. Containers can be wounding, as many prisons are. Kwikwexwehlp is an exception. It is steeped in Indigenous culture, from which both the residents and the staff draw strength and healing. The offenders are not referred to as "prisoners" or "inmates", but "residents". This itself is a de-fragmenting use of language. Most, if not all, of the residents have been severely traumatized in their youth. The staff balance compassion and needed boundaries to create healing interactions. Many of the residents share freely of their feelings, a sign of the trust created by the container. Even visitors to the prison have integrative experiences because of the power of the container. The first time I visited Kwikwexwehlp was during one of their monthly welcoming ceremonies. There were three new residents arriving, and three residents and one staff member leaving. Picture a giant community house warmed by two wood fires in the center, with residents, staff, community members and visitors sitting all around the perimeter. Imagine arriving at the prison for the first time as an offender and being wrapped in a blanket while listening to words of support for the journey of transformation ahead of you. Visualize an Elder telling you that the blanket you are wrapped in is a "blanket of love" and a "hug" available to you whenever you need it. Imagine, perhaps for the first time, being treated with respect and care. Envision the healing that takes place in such a safe container.

Types of Containers at Kwikwexwelhp

Kwikwexwelhp encompasses all four types of containers discussed in this paper: physical space, processes, social relationships, and relationships with the other-than-human world.

Physical Space

The Pacific Northwest architecture of the healing village fits in with the tall cedar and fir trees; the residents' buildings have a common kitchen that encourages responsibility for cooking and social interactions; and the large community house described above serves as the heart of the village. All these physical spaces support the healing capacity of the village.

Processes

The importance of cultural and ceremonial processes in creating the healing container is seen in the residents' survey responses to the question "What, here at Kwikwexwelhp, has been healing for you?" and "What has been helpful?" Four of the five top responses were processes: "ceremonies", "sweats", "sundance", and "prayers".

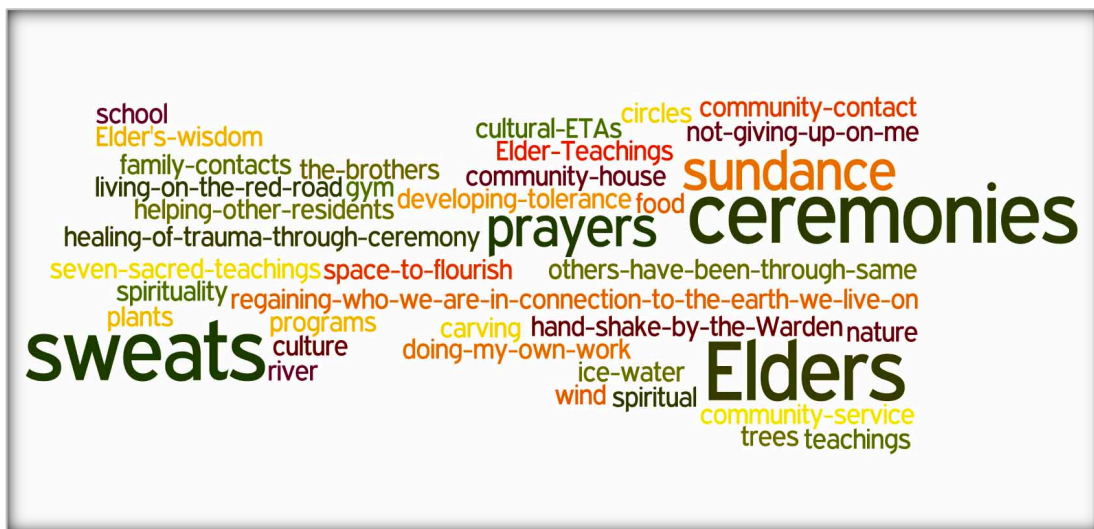


Fig. 10. Responses to the questions:
"What, here at Kwikwexwelhp, has been healing for you?" and "What has been helpful?"

Social Relationships

The top response was "Elders", highlighting the primary importance of the three full-time Elders in creating this healing container. The Elders listen to their stories, provide ancestral teachings, connect the residents with their culture, help resolve conflicts, guide ceremonies, and create an atmosphere of care and respect. Other social/interpersonal responses to what is healing included "helping other residents", "hand shake by the warden", "others have been through the same", "family contacts", "the brothers" (referring to the other residents), "not giving up on me" and "community contact". Social connections and the reduction of the "us and them" dynamic that is found in many

prisons are enhanced by careful use of language such as not calling the staff “guards”, referring to the community as “family”, and the absence of uniforms. Importantly, both the staff and residents prioritize respectful, caring interactions.

Relationships With the Other-Than-Human World

In addition to social relationships, the importance of relationships with nature and spirituality in creating the healing container is evident in responses such as “regaining who we are in connection to the earth we live on”, “wind”, “plants”, “river”, “trees”, “seven sacred teachings” and “spirituality”. The spacious natural wooded setting, cradled by a rocky creek used for spirit baths, holds residents and staff as only nature can.

Maintaining the Integrity of the Container

As mentioned, containers can be ineffective or effective, and can be wounding or healing. Conceivably they could be wounding for some and healing for others. Different types of schools, for example, work for some students and not for others. While contemplating who decides whether the container is effective or not, I turned to Nel Noddings’ ethic of care. According to Noddings, in order to have caring relations, it’s important that the one who is cared for *feels* cared for (Noddings, 2013). Applying this to the fragments, the efficacy of a container must be assessed by its effect on what it is containing and on whether it has an integrative effect. It is important to keep in mind that every container is situated within other containers. For example, the prison is situated in the wider community whose safety also needs to be considered. Attunement to the needs of those it holds, and to the context of the larger container in which it is situated, are both important.

There are both staff and residents who don’t fit in with the healing goals of Kwikwexwelhp. Staff members who insist on being called “guards” and who treat the offenders more like “cons” than humans, and residents who cling to the con code and don’t want to work on themselves, can negatively impact the culture of healing at the village. Thinking back to my large fragment that initially didn’t fit into the circle, I muse that there may not be room for pieces that threaten the integrity of the container, and that a different container may be needed. If people can stay relationally engaged even while maintaining a boundary to protect the container, they are maintaining the larger container by respecting the relatedness of all beings. Once, one of the residents left the grounds of Kwikwexwelhp and a warrant was issued for his arrest. A search ensued throughout the night, and in the morning when he turned himself in after having spent the night in the forest, arrangements were made to transfer him to a medium-security prison. As he waited in the holding cell, Elder Helen Joe, heartbroken, brought him a large plate of food and listened to his fear. Later, the entire community gathered in the community house to process their responses. “I care about you guys,” Helen told them, emotionally. “All of you are meant to be in my life and I was meant to be in your lives. This is a family. We all affect each other.” As the warden and others spoke, the message was clear: *You are important; you matter, and you are cared about. We are interdependent. Respect the freedom you are given here.* The healing container was maintained

because the social relationships were attended to and an event that could have resulted in more fragmentation became an opportunity to affirm wholeness.

Conclusion

Containers can be physical (e.g., a space), or a process (e.g., creating artwork, undertaking a PhD journey, participating in ceremony), or social/interpersonal (e.g., community), or formed through relationships with the other-than-human world. The container helps create relationships between the parts, and that is what provides meaning and healing capacity. Colours and shapes can be used to represent fragments you encounter, together with the concepts discussed (e.g., the right-size container; receiving, holding and letting go; differentiation and linking; reflection; transformation, etc.) to help determine what kind of container your felt sense guides you to use. For those who are interested in a pedagogy of repair and are attempting to create effective containers—whether for the integration of individual psyches in therapy or to enhance learning in a classroom, or to solve social problems—using visual images, the felt sense and metaphors can elicit implicit knowing of what is effective and what is not.²

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Endnotes

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