



The pain experience of traditional Crow Indian  
by Norma Kay Krumwiede

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Nursing  
Montana State University

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Abstract:

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the pain experience of the traditional Crow Indian people. An understanding of the Crow people's experience of pain is crucial in order to provide quality nursing care to members of this population. As nurse researchers gain understanding of these cultural gaps and report their findings, clinically based nurses will be better equipped to serve and meet the unique needs of the traditional Crow Indian.

Ethnographic interviews were conducted with 15 traditional Crow Indians currently living on the reservation in southeastern Montana. The informants identified themselves as traditional utilizing Milligan's (1981) typology. Collection of data occurred through (a) spontaneous interviews, (b) observations, (c) written stories, (d) historical landmarks, and (e) field notes. Spradley's (1979) taxonomic analysis method was used to condense the large amount of data into a taxonomy of concepts.

The taxonomy of Crow pain evolved into two indigenous categories of "Good Hurt" and "Bad Hurt". The Crow view "good hurt" as being embedded in natural life events and ceremonies, rituals and healing.

The Crow experience "bad hurt" as emanating from two sources: loss and hardship. The Crow believe that every person will experience both "good hurt" and "bad hurt" sometime during their lifetime. The Crow gain knowledge, wisdom and status as they experience, live through, and learn from painful events throughout their lifetime.

The research results can be used by health care professionals to better understand the Crow Indian people. Greater understanding of the cultural dimensions of pain will help health care professionals develop an effective approach to providing quality pain management to the Crow Indian population.

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Master of Nursing

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY-BOZEMAN  
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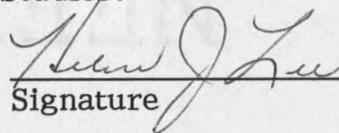
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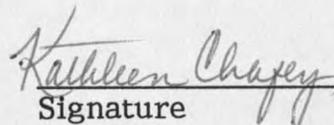
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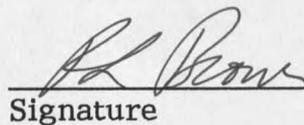
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The thesis is dedicated to the family and friends of Clara Bends.  
The inspiration and motivation for master's study and  
investigation of this master's thesis was initiated  
when working for Clara Bends.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the pain experience of the traditional Crow Indian people. An understanding of the Crow people's experience of pain is crucial in order to provide quality nursing care to members of this population. As nurse researchers gain understanding of these cultural gaps and report their findings, clinically based nurses will be better equipped to serve and meet the unique needs of the traditional Crow Indian.

Ethnographic interviews were conducted with 15 traditional Crow Indians currently living on the reservation in southeastern Montana. The informants identified themselves as traditional utilizing Milligan's (1981) typology. Collection of data occurred through (a) spontaneous interviews, (b) observations, (c) written stories, (d) historical landmarks, and (e) field notes. Spradley's (1979) taxonomic analysis method was used to condense the large amount of data into a taxonomy of concepts.

The taxonomy of Crow pain evolved into two indigenous categories of "Good Hurt" and "Bad Hurt". The Crow view "good hurt" as being embedded in natural life events and ceremonies, rituals and healing. The Crow experience "bad hurt" as emanating from two sources: loss and hardship. The Crow believe that every person will experience both "good hurt" and "bad hurt" sometime during their lifetime. The Crow gain knowledge, wisdom and status as they experience, live through, and learn from painful events throughout their lifetime.

The research results can be used by health care professionals to better understand the Crow Indian people. Greater understanding of the cultural dimensions of pain will help health care professionals develop an effective approach to providing quality pain management to the Crow Indian population.

## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Nursing researchers and practitioners recognize the concept of culture as a major variable that influences an individual's reaction, expression, and definition of pain. Early childhood teachings form the basis of the individual's attitudes and reactions to pain. The individual learns how to express pain, react to pain, and seek relief for pain.

An individual's pain experience is culturally based (Villarruel & Ortiz de Montellano, 1992). Harding (1981) conveys that traditional beliefs and behaviors continue to influence the modern Crow people:

Culture is viewed as a major variable in the determination of health and in the utilization of health care services. Culture influences the development and maintenance of many health practices. The present Crow Indian culture consists of diverse contrast between traditional and modern life styles (p. 1).

Thus, to provide culturally congruent nursing care to the Crow people, it is essential to first identify and understand the cultural background of the traditional Crow people.

Purpose of Study

No studies which report the pain experience of Crow people were located. Lack of cultural knowledge contributes to misunderstandings

between Native Americans and non-Native Americans. The specific purpose of this qualitative research study was to describe and define the experience of pain for traditional Crow.

### Conceptual Framework

#### Pain

McCaffery (1968) has stated, "Pain is whatever the experiencing person says it is, existing whenever the experiencing person says it does" (p. 95). Jeans and Melzack (1992) and the members of the International Association for the Study of Pain (1979) support McCaffery's definition that pain is a personal and subjective experience. The pain experience consists of physiological and psychological aspects which are influenced by cultural teachings, cognitive variables, and psychological variables. The focus of this study is the effect of culture on the experience of pain.

Members of the Crow Tribe are at great risk of inadequate pain assessment and pain management. As a whole, the tribe has a cultural tradition vastly different from the general patient population. Many members of the Crow Tribe, particularly elderly persons, speak only the traditional Crow Language. Consequently, the Crow population fits the definition of a vulnerable rural population (Bushy, 1991).

## Culture

Culture is a complicated linkage of values, beliefs, practices, laws, traditions, customs, artifacts, knowledge, language, and patterns of behavior passed down from generation to generation within a cultural group (Branch & Paxton, 1976; Hartog & Hartog, 1983). Through the socialization process, the cultural setting shapes the individual's thoughts and actions in relation to a pain sensation. The socialization process teaches the individual the following about pain: (a) what is expected; (b) what is acceptable behavior; (c) which responses are appropriate; (d) who should be told about the pain sensation; and (e) which pain sensations need immediate attention (Abu-saad & Tesler, 1986).

Watson (1979) believes that culture has a strong influence on the individual's pain threshold and that the most noticeable difference between cultures relate to pain tolerance. The research conducted by Zborowski (1952, 1969) demonstrates that individuals raised in different cultural settings perceive and express pain differently.

The experience of pain is culturally specific. Perception of pain is an individual process which depends on the unique factors of that individual. Thus, the cultural beliefs of the Crow Tribe greatly influences the pain experience of the individual Crow person. The individual's response to pain is based on personality, social/cultural influences and

personal experience. As nurses provide care, it is important to understand the effect that culture has upon the individual.

### Personal Experience

Working as a Registered Nurse at a regional medical center, I first became aware that the behavior patterns of Native American and non-Native American patients differ in regard to pain. The Native Americans I cared for seldom verbalized pain and did not take as much medication for pain as did non-Native American patients. Many Native Americans also requested that traditional "medicine men" be present to assist with healing and dealing with pain.

The second awareness occurred while conducting research on patients with low back pain for an orthopedic surgeon. One of the research questions utilized during the intake interview for a low back pain study was, "If '0' is no pain, and '100' is pain so bad you could live for only a few minutes, what number says how bad your pain usually is?" (Snider Evaluation Tool, 1992, unpublished). The Native American patients were unable to answer this question. It soon became clear that the linear scale of 0-100 proved to be an ineffective way to determine pain level for the Native American population.

These experiences motivated me to attempt to fill the lack of cultural information pertaining to pain in hopes of providing improved nursing care to patients. I chose to study the Crow Native Americans of southeastern

Montana because of location and personal experiences while working with Crow patients and their families.

### Definitions

Milligan's (1981) Belief and Behavior Typology has been adapted for the study. Milligan's typology consists of three categories: (a) Modern: Developing the new beliefs and behaviors which are consistent within the current life style; (b) Traditional: Maintaining the belief and behaviors that have persisted for generations; (c) Transitional: Maintaining some of the beliefs and behaviors that have persisted for generations but also developing some of the new beliefs and behaviors that are consistent with the current life style.

The following definitions by Wood (1993) have been provided to clarify the terminology in Chapter 2. These definitions include (a) Band: A small group of Crows who lived and traveled together; (b) Clan: A group of Crow families, the members of which believed themselves to be very closely related; (c) Reservation: A tract of land set aside by the U.S. Government for use by a specific group of Native Americans; and (d) Tribe: A group of people that share a language, culture, and religious beliefs.

### Pilot Study

As part of an ethnographic studies nursing course at Montana State University-Bozeman, an initial ethnographic study of Crow Pain was

conducted during the fall of 1992. The purpose of the study was to explore the pain experience of Crow people.

The cultural group studied was the Montana Crow Indians currently living on the Crow Indian Reservation. Individual interviews were conducted in the towns of Lodge Grass, Garryowen, and Crow Agency. My goal was to seek out and learn from the "wise ones" and to become aware of their perspective of the pain experience. The "wise ones have lived many years and have learned about the many hurts of life" (personal communication with key informant, October 1992).

The study design consisted of ethnographic interviews and analysis (Spradley, 1979). I became deeply involved in the Crow cultural scene and this involvement enabled me to interview Crow people who had expert knowledge. In the unfamiliar cultural setting, I became the student and established the role of the informant as an expert teacher.

Collection of data occurred through (a) spontaneous interviews, taped when allowed; (b) general observations; (c) written stories; (d) historical landmarks; and (e) field notes. Examples of questions asked appear in Appendix A.

The response from a very elderly key informant to the question "What is pain?" formed the two main headings of the Crow pain taxonomy. The answer was "Pain is good hurt and bad hurt" (personal communication,

October 1992). The resulting taxonomy of Crow pain evolved into two contrasting sets - Good Hurt and Bad Hurt (see Appendix B).

Spradley's (1979) taxonomic analysis method was used to condense the large amounts of information from interviews into a taxonomy of concepts. The taxonomic method searches for an interval framework of domains to lead the researcher to identify contrasting sets. Each interview transcript was coded and pertinent information related to pain was extracted and placed onto cards. A card sort method was then used to break the data into categories. As each category collected more cards, a cultural theme evolved. The taxonomy of Crow pain evolved from the data collected.

It was evident from the initial ethnographic study that the primary focus of the follow up study needed to be extended. Themes were identified but complete saturation had not occurred. Further refinement of the taxonomy was needed through further study of (a) Crows' expression of pain, (b) Crows' experience of acute and/or chronic pain, and (c) Crows' perceptions of acute and/or chronic pain. Directions from this initial research include (a) inquiring about the "wise ones", (b) "sending word" to the key informant, and (c) allowing time for interviews to evolve.

### Significance of Study

According to Leininger (1978) the holistic view of nursing directs the profession toward a transcultural approach. The nurse must consider the cultural uniqueness of the patient when establishing a plan of care. Nursing must be sensitive to individual needs. Nurses must also be knowledgeable about the cultures from which their patients originate. A broader knowledge, appreciation, and understanding of diverse cultures will bridge the communication difficulties between care giver and the care receiver.

An understanding of the Crow people's experience of pain is crucial in order to provide quality nursing care to members of this population. As nurse researchers gain understanding of cultural gaps and document findings, clinically based nurses will be better equipped to serve and meet the unique needs of the Crow people. Nurses take pride in providing holistic care; however, until this cultural gap is filled, nurses lacking a true understanding of Crow culture may be less effective at caring for the Crow people.

This study provides a basic understanding of the role of pain as a major variable as it pertains to the Crow people. Descriptive data were gathered about traditional beliefs and behaviors that affect the experience of pain. The research results can be used by health care professionals to

better understand the Crow people. Greater understanding of the cultural dimensions of pain will help health care professionals develop an effective approach to providing quality pain management to the Crow population.

## CHAPTER 2

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Crow

In the pilot study, it became apparent that the pain and hardship that Crow ancestors had experienced, the modern Crow also consider their pain and hardship to this day. Therefore, it was necessary to fully understand the culture of the Crow people from a historical perspective in order to thoroughly research the meaning of pain to the Crow people.

The literature review is a synthesis of ethnographies by Rodney Frey (1979, 1987) and Robert H. Lowie (1954, 1956, 1963, 1993). Additional literature about the Crow from Algier (1993), Hoxie (1989), Linderman (1932, 1957, 1962, 1972, 1974), Nabakaov (1967), Utley (1979) and Wagner & Allen (1987) was also used to support the historical synthesis of events.

The Crow are an indigenous tribe of North American Plains Indians. The Crow are essentially plainsmen who have lived in southeastern Montana for generations. In literature, the Crow have been referred to as "Absarokee", "Apsaalooke", "Apsaruke", and "Kite". The Apsaalooke name translates to "the children of the long-beaked bird" (Lowie, 1993, p. 1).

The Indian country had a wealth of natural resources and the Europeans were very interested in the resources and material items that existed in this country. When Europeans began to occupy the Indian country, problems developed as these very different cultures came together. The Europeans did not recognize nor understand the importance of the spiritual, cultural, and intellectual riches which the Native Americans exhibited. The Europeans' religious bigotry, cultural biases and materialistic world view prevented the Europeans from understanding the Native Americans.

The Native Americans were confused with the various views of the dominant society. Francis Parkman, a 19th century historian, stated "Spanish civilization crushed the Indians; English civilization scorned and neglected him; French civilization embraced and cherished him" (Hoxie, 1989, p. 7). The pressures of all the colonial expansion forced the Crow as well as other Native American tribes to move westward. The tribe had to change from being a settled group to a nomadic people, who relied on hunting and followed game in order to support the diet instead of raising corn and squash. Native Americans actively and passively resisted annihilation and refused to relinquish the unique identity of Native American culture and be assimilated into the dominant society.

## The Crow of the Buffalo Days

### Tribal Origins

Native American tribes in North America spent much of the past 12,000 years hunting antelope for meat, gathering edible seeds and berries, planting and raising squash and corn and being very attuned to living in harmony with nature. In the years following the Ice Age, the receding of the glaciers left abundant game and plant life. Native Americans traveled the great plains in small bands, hunting game and gathering plants for food. The tribe moved from place to place with the seasons determined by the availability of the food sources.

Originally, the entire Crow Tribe lived together in small villages of dome shaped dwellings made from wood, grass and mud. Each lodge housed several families living in very close quarters. As the tribe became more nomadic, it became necessary to split into smaller, more efficient groups, called bands. These small nomadic bands then lived, traveled, and hunted independently throughout the area. The camps consisted of tepees constructed from a wooden frame covered with animal skins, well suited to the lifestyle of such a nomadic people. The tepees could be easily set up and quickly taken down.

In the winter, bands of Crow camped along the upper Missouri River in the valleys of the Rocky Mountains. The topography of these regions

protected the Crow from cold winters and the heavy snows. In the spring, the bands would travel to areas where rhubarb, strawberries, and wild turnips grew. Later the bands would search for chokecherry bushes, plum trees and other wild plants covered with ripe fruit. All year long the Crow hunted in small parties for rabbit, deer, and elk. Each summer all the bands would unite for a great buffalo hunt. This was a special occasion which allowed the Crow to meet with families, visit with friends, exchange stories, and couples were married.

The ideals of generosity, bravery and loyalty contributed to the strength and character of the Crow people. The Crow's utilitarian philosophy to do what was best for the entire group is the essence of Crow way of life.

At that time, the religious leaders controlled the ceremonies and the elders made all the political decisions. The elderly women owned and farmed the garden plots that provided food. The early villagers were less attracted to the Plains territory than to the rich farmland on the Missouri River. However, the villagers soon came to know the importance of game in the grasslands and began to hunt the buffalo for food and for hides.

The Crow Tribe made the transition from farming to a hunting and gathering tribe (Hoxie, 1989). The tribe traded with the French traders and trappers, established trade networks, and communicated information to the dominant society. Techniques and skills were passed from the dominant

society to the Crow tribe. Some Crow learned new techniques of agriculture and sought fertile land and good sources of water in which to establish communities. Trying to live harmoniously on the same land was one of the major conflicts between the dominant society and Native American tribes.

The Crow people worked, traveled, and developed a unique way of life, one distinct from other groups, both Native American and non-Native American. The Crow maintained all important institutions in mobile form; for example, instruction was not provided in school houses, but in tepees. The Crow did not find spirituality in the building as did the dominant people, but rather in sacred places or in special objects that would be carried from camp to camp. The true meaning of life was not to be discovered in a permanent settlement with materialistic objects, but was found in the hearts and minds of the Native American people.

An important dimension of Crow culture is that each tribal member belongs to a clan. Each clan is composed of a group of related families, thus the groups in the Crow societies include many more people than the small nuclear families typical of the dominant society. Clan members have a very special and close relationship with one another. In fact, each clan is so intimately related, that a man and woman from the same clan cannot marry.

Historically, the clan system provided many role models for the children. Members of the same clan assisted one another with special religious ceremonies and hunting trips, and shared pride in each other's good fortunes in battle. While members of the dominant society place emphasis on an individual's occupation or personal accomplishment, the Crow people value family ties. The Crow are bound together by a strong kinship and by a uniform set of cultural beliefs.

To this day, the Crow observe a strict code of behavior based on relationship to one another. The youngsters are expected to respect the elders within the clan, known as clan uncles and clan aunts, who are often called mother or father. Adults would honor these relatives by giving special gifts, addressing these relatives with special dignity, and by sharing meat from hunting expeditions. Each Crow relationship calls for different behavior.

The Crow believe that certain relatives must be avoided; for instance, married men and women are not permitted to speak with parents-in-law. Children of men who belong to the same clan are called joking cousins. These cousins are expected to keep each other in line through constant ribbing and joke playing. The Crow believe this form of discipline is much more effective than harsh punishments such as the dominant society inflicts. Historically, these customs were all very important to the Crow society as cooperation among the tribe's people was essential for survival

as the tribe traveled from camp to camp. Even though the family structure and the customs are very confusing to outsiders, notable is that these customs still have great practical value to the Crow.

### Crow Rituals and Customs

Historically, the most prominent societies were comprised of young men who had gained honor in battle and had acquired skills needed to defend the Crow homeland. Members within each warrior society competed for honor and glory. The societies participated in public parades and took great pride in group successes, established unique customs, and chose a society leader. To be a warrior society leader, a man had to do four things: lead a war party, capture an enemy horse, be the first to touch an enemy in battle, and snatch an enemy's weapon. The warrior who achieved these great feats was called "Eacheeitché", which meant "big man". The non-Native Americans called these men chiefs. The Crow leaders were given different responsibilities. For example, the elders of the clan settled family disputes and advised the chief, holy men and women performed the ceremonies, and Medicine Men knew the medicinal properties of herbs and other means of curing illnesses.

A ceremony practiced by the male Crow is the "vision quest" during which a man traveled alone to a remote area. The man prayed to the creator asking for guidance through a spiritual vision. Upon successfully seeing a vision, a spirit would appear and offer instructions or directions

on how to live. The spirits often took the form of an animal such as a bear or buffalo and this animal would then become his guardian. Sometimes the man would make an offering of his flesh to the creator to ensure that the vision quest would be successful.

Another ritual important to the Crow people was the original sun dance. This ceremony was usually held in the summer and centered around warriors who wanted revenge for a friend or a close relative who died in battle. The skin of the pledger was pierced with leather thongs. As other participants danced, beat drums and sang, the dancer would fall into a trance during which a vision would appear, providing confidence to be successful in avenging and punishing the enemies for the death of a friend or relative.

Several days were spent preparing for the sun dance. The ceremony was usually assisted by a holy man and an elder who became the man's sun dance father. The men organized the dancers, singers, drummers and fellow warriors, and helped build the sun dance lodge. Sacred objects were assembled and placed in the lodge. The organizers made special costumes, gathered buffalo tongues to feed the participants, and prepared the pledger for the ordeal throughout the following days. The organizers also made a sun dance doll, believed to possess great spiritual power. These sun dance dolls were usually made to match whatever was seen

during the vision quest. The dolls were kept protected and then passed on from one generation to the next.

The young warrior (pledger) would emerge from his tepee and move stoically and solemnly to the sun dance lodge at which time an elaborate dance would begin. The pledger was continually encouraged by family, friends, sun dance father, and fellow warriors to dance rhythmically with the beating of the drums. Most of the dancers stopped from time to time, but the pledger continued to dance. The pledger was never allowed to rest, and needed to dance continuously. An eagle bone whistle was blown in time with the drum beats. The sun dance father's doll was suspended before the pledger throughout the dancing. The pledger would stare at the doll until falling into a deep trance. It was in this trance-like state that the pledger would receive a vision.

The Crow had specific tasks which were linked to women's work and to men's work. The girls were instructed on how to butcher buffalo, how to process the buffalo hides, and how to make tools. The girls learned how to sew leather into moccasins, tepees, and clothing. Women were also the guardians of the husband's shields and were in charge of most of the day-to-day activities within the Crow camp. The boys were taught how to scout for enemies and to track game and were encouraged to do this at a very early age. The boys were then prepared to defend the camp, go on enemy raids, and provide food for the clan. However, there was no strict

division of labor. If a woman showed specific skills in a man's task, the woman was allowed to proceed with it. If a man showed interest in women's work, it was acceptable to engage in that work. It was important that each individual do whatever particular skill or activity that the person was well suited to do.

The Crow's traditional form of government was well suited for the customary way of life and maintained the cohesiveness of families and communities. Leforge was able to observe how this historical political system operated through the tribe (Hoxie, 1989). Leforge reported that the Crow "had among themselves law and order, more effectively prevalent than among any community of white people I have known. Their laws were few, but they were well enforced" (Hoxie, 1989, p. 42).

One aspect of Crow tribal life most difficult for people to appreciate was the religious life. Larocque (Hoxie, 1989) interpreted the Crow's beliefs as good and bad spirits and the supreme master of life. Larocque considered the Crow a very deeply religious people, despite the fact that the Crow did not have any permanent churches. Sunday was not the only day that one observed religion. The Crow believed that the tribe was blessed by the creator of the earth, and that the creator was never far away. Crow religious beliefs were a part of the Crow individual each and every day, whereas non-Native American people built monuments for religion and reserved Sunday as a day to be religious. As stated earlier, the Crow

regarded their homeland as proof of the creator's presence. Because the creator was nearby, the Crow people believed that the creator could be contacted through special ceremonies such as the vision quest and the sun dance.

While special ceremonies were important religious rituals to the tribe, the time taken for these rituals to occur was minimal compared to the time spent in everyday religious life. Crow religion and visions were sought on a consistent basis. The Crow carried "medicines" which ranged widely in size and power. The objects could be very small articles such as a tooth of an animal or a rock, or very large bundles that held a variety of sacred objects for an individual. Some of these items had been "told" to the Crow man during a vision quest. These items were thought to have special power, required special care, and were carried with the tribe from camp to camp.

The importance of this discussion is to understand how outsiders believed the Crow lived a very free and unstructured way of life, yet outsiders failed to appreciate the very deep sense of group responsibility that the Crow people felt and demonstrated.

#### The Arrival of Strangers in Crow Territory

Strangers entered Crow territory for several reasons. Some fur traders came seeking trade with the Native Americans while some came just for the sense of adventure. Settlers then followed the fur traders,

traveling westward in covered wagons seeking a new way of life. These strangers introduced the Native Americans to new customs, new ideas, and basically changed the Native Americans' way of life forever. The fur trade business seemed to be very good for the Native Americans, but unfortunately, the non-Native Americans not only introduced foreign goods but also foreign diseases such as smallpox and measles. These diseases spread quickly among the Crow and were usually worse during the winter when bands shared very close quarters. However, the Crow quickly learned to adapt and also how to contain an outbreak of smallpox or an outbreak of measles. When an individual became infected in the group, the Crow would split off into very small groups and scattered in different directions. In this way these very small groups were able to isolate themselves from the virus.

In 1887, the Northern Cheyenne Tribe honored Sword Bearer for bravery shown during a sun dance ceremony. Sword Bearer was given increased authority and the support of the Crow people. Later on that summer, Sword Bearer led a successful raid and upon returning, as was the custom, celebrated victory by running through the camp, yelling and firing rifles into the air. The celebration got carried away and later Army troops attempted to arrest Sword Bearer. When Sword Bearer would not submit the soldiers opened fire, killing Sword Bearer and eight other Crow warriors.

With the death of Sword Bearer vanished the Crow's last hope for returning to the old way of life. After this last act of bravery, Washington officials became very strict and wanted to divide the Crow Indian reservation into individually owned plots, or allotments. The dominant society thought that this would allow so much land for each Native American to farm in order to support the family. However, most Native American people were reluctant to drastically alter the family lifestyle, and lacked the necessary knowledge to farm successfully. With the land broken into allotments, the Crow people who were not proficient at farming were able to sell portions of land to the settlers, which explains how they came to live and are currently farming within the boundaries of the Crow reservation.

There are many documented accounts of the difficulties Crow people faced in adapting to reservation life. Many Crow could not accept the reality of being restricted to such a small territory as the reservation. There were a few Crow who did take the government seriously and attempted to learn how to farm like the settlers. Some Crow tried to position the tribe in a politically advantageous stance so that no additional homelands would be lost to the government.

Chief Plenty Coups was born in the summer of 1848 and became a chief of the Crow Tribe at a very young age. According to Linderman (1962), Plenty Coups was known for his impressive speech and commanding

presence. His youth was an advantage in envisioning the future of the Crow tribe in a rapidly changing environment. Plenty Coups was able to maintain dignity and a strong sense of pride, which gained the respect of the officials in Washington. Plenty Coups was very effective in efforts to protect the Crow people's way of life. He encouraged the Crow to join the United States Army as soldiers and as scouts and by so doing, the Crow were subsequently scorned by other tribes. Plenty Coups stressed the importance of education and believed that the Crow's future power would be directly linked with knowledge. The last of the traditional Crow Chiefs, Plenty Coups died in 1932 at age 84.

#### The Crow of Modern Days

In 1934 the Crow people took charge of their own tribal affairs. By 1935, the tribe had developed a General Council which still governs the reservation today and works to improve the Crow standard of living. The Council has tried to increase the tribe's independence by improving the Crow economy. The council encouraged farming and ranching, but in today's world, the Crow people find it difficult to be successful in agriculture. Part of this is due to the local non-Native American controlled banks which are reluctant to lend funds to the Native American people. Thus, the Native American people lack money to buy cattle, tools, seed, tractors and equipment.

There are few jobs available on the reservation. Even though the Tribe has tried to solve this by starting programs and businesses on the reservation, the results have been unsuccessful. Crow people find it difficult to compete with non-Native American businessmen. Most of the reservation income comes from Crow workers hired by the tribal government for enforcing laws, managing programs to improve the tribe's health care, education, and housing. There are other primary sources of seasonal jobs off the reservation as cowboys, farmhands, and at the coal companies, resulting in a high level of unemployment during winter months. According to Hoxie (1989) the unemployment rate escalated to greater than 50%.

Reservation schools have not effectively dealt with Crow children. Many Crow children drop out of school, although the number of college graduates has increased over the years. Little Big Horn Community College was established on the reservation in 1980 to enable Crow students to gain education to better compete for jobs (Hoxie, 1989).

The Crow people are trying to establish a greater sense of unity by banding together to collectively fight political battles. The Crow people continue to work hard to defend individuals and homes from outsiders. The battleground has changed from Plains skirmishes to courtrooms. The Crow people have adapted and learned very well how to work within the dominant society's system. These successes have helped to keep the Crow

spirit strong and will continue to help the Crow people thrive in the years to come.

The review of literature provided a historical account and perspective that are imperative to the basic understanding of the Crow people. The literature provided insight into the pain experience of the traditional Crow which helped formulate the questions utilized for the data collection.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methods utilized to study the experience of pain by traditional Crow persons. Design of study, human subjects, population, sample, data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability are described in this chapter.

#### Design of Study

The purpose of this research study was to describe the experience of pain for traditional Crow people, utilizing the ethnographic approach. Spradley (1979) describes ethnography as "the work of describing a culture" (p. 3). The essential perspective of the ethnographic approach is to understand another way of life from the point of view of the indigenous members.

#### Human Subjects

Montana State University-Bozeman, College of Nursing's Human Subjects Review was completed during the summer of 1994. The consent form was read to each informant. I answered all questions related to informed consent and the research study. I emphasized that participation

was strictly voluntary, confidentiality of their identity would be maintained, and the informant could stop the interview or withdraw from the study at any time. Each informant signed the consent and permission to tape the interview was verified. No informants withdrew their interviews from this study.

### Population

One of Montana's many Plains Native American tribes, the Crow Tribe is located on a reservation in southeastern Montana. The Crow villages include Crow Agency, Wyola, St. Xavier, Pryor, Garryowen, Fort Smith, and Lodge Grass. The population of the Crow Reservation is 6,366 according to the U.S. Department of Commerce (1990) and the size of the reservation is listed as 1,554,253.87 acres. However, there is current disagreement over the accuracy of surveying done on the 107th Meridian. If the land is returned to the Crow, this would increase the current size of the reservation. The Crow people take great pride in the fact that 79% of the Crow population speaks the native language (Bryan, 1985).

All categories of Milligan's (1981) cultural typology can be identified in Crow people. The "traditional" category consists of practicing Crow people. The traditional Crow hold fast to the old ways. The typology of "transitional" consists of the Crow who are positioned on the continuum between "modern" and "traditional". The Crow categorized in the

transitional group consist of those who blend both the old and new beliefs and behaviors. The "modern" Crow are viewed as the furthest removed from the old life ways.

### Sample

The purposive sampling technique allowed me to locate key informants who were cultural experts. The informants were indigenous Crow persons who possessed cultural knowledge. Two criteria were developed to identify potential informants. First, the eligible participant self identified as "traditional" Crow according to Milligan's (1981) cultural orientation scheme. Secondly, the participant was at least 50 years of age. Keeping in mind the need for enculturation, current involvement, and adequate time for the informant to participate, the informants were then approached.

The initial access to a Crow informant was initiated by calling a nursing home located in Hardin, Montana. I asked the director of nursing if there were any Crow residents. The director then approached the initial informant and inquired if it would be all right for me to come and speak with the resident. I traveled to Hardin and spoke with the resident, who then identified another possible informant who lived in Lodge Grass, Montana.

I traveled to Lodge Grass to locate this potential informant. The directions were sketchy and no house numbers were visible on the

government housing. After several unsuccessful attempts, I located the second informant. This informant also identified several other Crow people who would be able to assist me with this project.

As I drove through Lodge Grass, I noticed five older men obviously engaged in social conversation while leaning on the hood of an old truck. I pulled over, introduced myself, and explained my purpose. The men were intrigued with my interest to learn more about the experience of pain in the Crow population. All of the men participated as informants. One of the men took me to visit Custer's Battlefield, which has now been renamed Little Bighorn Battlefield.

The sample continued to snowball until a total of fifteen Crow individuals were interviewed. Nine male and six female informants participated in this study. The participants ranged from 50 to 101 years of age. All participants lived on the Crow Indian Reservation and identified themselves as traditional Crow. The difficult task was to stop the momentum of the snowball when I had obtained enough informants from whom to collect data.

#### Data Collection

Each potential informant was informed of the study, asked to identify cultural orientation (Milligan, 1981) and age. If the two criteria were met,

an informed consent was obtained from the informant. The interview was then conducted.

The semi-structured interview was developed to elicit responses from traditional Crow about the concept of pain. Three types of questions were utilized to collect the data. The first type was descriptive questions. Descriptive questions elicited data about terms, perspectives, and situations. Examples of questions asked include: "Could you describe a painful situation?" "Could you describe the pain of surgery?" "Could you tell me what you do at a sun dance?" The second type was structural questions, which elicited data about the relationships and "how's" of the terms identified from the descriptive questions. Examples of questions asked include: "What are all the different kinds of 'good hurt'?" "Can you share any other type of 'good hurt'?" I found it important to repeat the structural questions in order to elicit multiple answers. The final type was that of contrast questions. The contrast questions elicited data about the differences in terms. Examples of contrast questions asked include: "What is the difference between 'good hurt' and 'bad hurt'?" "What distinguishes death as a good or a bad hurt?"

The interviews were conducted on the Crow Indian Reservation during the late summer and early fall months of 1994. The informants participated in individual and/or group interviews. The interviews ranged from one to six hours in length, and gradually increased as the data collection

progressed. I learned that the time spent in initiating, developing, and maintaining the researcher/informant relationship was important to the Crow person. The Crow informants also taught me the importance of patience while waiting for answers to questions and the need to take a more passive approach during the interview process.

Data began to reoccur by the second interview. Terms, relationships, and the similarities and differences became very apparent during the sixth interview. Interviews continued to progress to what Lincoln & Guba (1985) have defined as the point of redundancy when only repeated stories, issues, and themes were being communicated.

Interviews were audio taped with the permission of the informant. No names were associated with the tapes. Each human subject was assigned a letter of the alphabet. Initial interviews were labeled as A-1, B-1, C-1, etc. Subsequent interviews with the same informant were labeled A-2, B-2, C-2, and so forth. A professional typist with 35 years experience in working with confidential information transcribed the audio tapes. When the transcription was completed, the audio tapes were erased.

Field notes containing direct quotes, ideas, summaries, general observations, and insights were taken during the interview. The field notes were further expanded following the conclusion of the interview. I would drive a short distance from the home of the informant and stop to record my reflections of the interview.

Data collection also occurred while participating in recreational, holiday, and special events. Written data from informants were also made available to me.

### Data Analysis

The first step in the data analysis was to develop a method for controlling and organizing the data. I decided to use a card system to control the large amount of data, and then developed a coding method which consisted of colored dots and symbols which identified the specific interview. Additional dots were then added as the surface, domain and taxonomic analyses evolved. In order to keep the information gained from interviews, field notes, and ideas separate and organized, I cut excerpts from the transcribed interviews and placed them on cards. I then reviewed my field notes and made notations of the important data and insights. Finally, I utilized colored cards to identified linkages, categories, and taxonomic boxes.

A card sort method was used to separate the data into categories. As each category built up more cards, a cultural category or theme evolved. The development of the cards took a large amount of time and energy, but later allowed me to easily manipulate and rearrange the groups of information. I filed the cards into groups until the final stages of development of the taxonomy. During the final analysis I designated an

entire wall in my home to display the multitude of cards and attached notations. The ability to visually display the cards allowed the identified themes to telescope into larger groups. The larger groups were then arranged by related categories, until the final grouping of categories was condensed into a taxonomy of concepts. The card sort method was extremely useful in this process.

Data analysis began after the completion of the first interview. Each interview was analyzed independently and then compared with previous interviews. Once the data of the interview and field notes were placed on cards and coded, the in-depth analysis could begin.

After reading the response to a question, I would place the response into one of three categories. The first category would be a definite yes (it does fit, support, and further develop the category). The second category would be a definite no (it does not fit, support, or develop the category). The third category was uncertainty (it seems to be important, but will have to be clarified during a subsequent interview). The raw data were organized, condensed, and placed into specific groups through the phases of surface, domain, and taxonomic analysis.

The first phase, surface analysis, was performed on each of the transcribed interviews and accompanying set of field notes. A surface analysis identified cultural terms and provided insight into the pain experience of the traditional Crow. The indigenous terms of "good hurt"

and "bad hurt" were identified during the surface analysis. Questions related to the variables identified during the surface analysis were generated and utilized with the next interview.

The second phase was domain analysis. The groups of "cover terms" and "included terms" as described by Spradley (1979), were reanalyzed, rearranged and re-grouped into themes. The semantic relationships of the themes, linkages, and boundaries of the themes evolved during the domain analysis. Additional questions were generated and asked of the informants, which further clarified the themes and validated how the theme was defined. Through careful domain analysis, the potential groups of themes were identified for the taxonomic analysis.

The final phase was taxonomic analysis. The discovery of cultural meaning was solidified during the taxonomic analysis phase. The relationships among the themes were grouped by similarities and differences. The similar groups were matched with other similar dimensions resulting in the identification of categories. The categories were designed to be inclusive of domains that fit tightly together. From these categories, I then constructed a preliminary taxonomy. The relationships of the categories located in this taxonomy were then analyzed and matched as a whole. The utilization of structural questions was extremely important during this phase of analysis. The outcome of

the taxonomic analysis resulted in the final taxonomy shown in Figure 1, the pain experience as described by traditional Crow.

### Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, validity refers to obtaining knowledge and understanding all the factors and dimensions related to a phenomenon being studied. Leininger (1985) defined the importance of validity in qualitative research as "qualitative validity is concerned with confirming the truth or understandings associated with phenomena" (p. 68). Validity was determined by meeting the goal of knowing and understanding the concept under study--the experience of pain by traditional Crow people.

In relation to qualitative research, Leininger (1985) stated

Reliability focuses on identifying and documenting recurrent, accurate, and consistent or inconsistent features, as patterns, themes, values, world views, experiences, and other phenomena confirmed in similar or different contexts (p. 69).

Stern (1985) further clarified that reliability is best substantiated by the participants. The participants serve as "the most reliable judges of their reality" (p. 151). The data for this study is reliable based on the assumption that the informants met the inclusion criteria and were reliable experts.

Patton's (1990) triangulation process was utilized to enhance integrity of the research. The first triangulation was that of sources. The same interview questions were asked of more than one informant and the

questions that elicited data were kept while other questions were eliminated or changed. The second form of triangulation was that of methods.

Individual and group interviews were conducted, field study notes were recorded following each interview session, and the findings were presented to the 1994 convention of the Montana Gerontology Society. The data were validated by the Crow participants attending the gerontology conference presentation. The data were positively validated during the follow-up interviews. The Crow participants listened and shared how the data impacted them. The third form of triangulation was that of analysis. Multiple analysts reviewed findings, including the thesis committee, one Crow informant and one non-Crow. Utilizing Patton's process of triangulation, the data were corrected.

## CHAPTER 4

## ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore and describe how traditional Crow people experience the phenomenon of pain. Meaningful insight is enhanced by knowledge of Crow history and culture, while a lack of this knowledge contributes to misunderstanding. Unfortunately there is often a significant Native American/non-Native American cultural gap.

Qualitative Analysis

A qualitative analysis was appropriate to provide a method to generate and ground concepts. The raw data were organized, reduced, and placed into specific groups. These groups then formed the taxonomy as shown in Figure 1, which categorize the pain described by traditional Crow people. The main taxonomic analytical method was developed by Spradley (1979). A surface analysis identified cultural themes and provided insights into the pain experience of the traditional Crow. Through careful domain analysis, I identified the taxonomic boxes or domains of knowledge.

Concept      Categories      Dimensions      Themes      Components

Concept	Categories	Dimensions	Themes	Components	
P A I N	GOOD HURT	Natural Life Events	Childbirth		
			Death		
		Healing	Traditional Practices	Indigenous Healers	
				Rituals/Ceremonies	
			Modern Medicine	Surgery	
				Medical Interventions	
	BAD HURT	Loss	Mass Annihilation		
			Death	Untimely Deaths	
				Separation	
			Former Way of Life	Nature	
				Tradition	
				Economic	
		Future of Children	Assimilation		
			Bicultural Adaptation		
		Hardship	Historical Transitions	Government-Reservation Days	
				Missionary Days	
				Boarding School Days	
			Social Problems	Discrimination	
Alcohol and Drugs					
Deprivations					
Illness and Disease	Physical Pain				
	Emotional Pain				

Figure 1. Taxonomy of pain as described by traditional Crow.

### Findings

The concept of pain experienced by Crow people evolved into the categories of "Good Hurt" and "Bad Hurt." These indigenous terms were articulated by the key informant who was the oldest of all the informants. These two distinct categories then served as the cornerstone of the analytic process. I then reviewed the interviews in which pain was discussed, identifying common themes and consistency of statements. The main themes were subsequently linked and placed in relation to the two categories of good and bad hurt.

The Crow view "Good Hurt" as being embedded in Natural Life Events and Healing. The Crow experience of "Bad Hurt" emanates from two primary sources: Loss and Hardship. The first source of Bad Hurt, which evolved into the dimension of Loss, includes the four themes of Mass Annihilation, Death, Former Way of Life and Future of Children. The second source of Bad Hurt evolved into the dimension of Hardship, and is associated with the four themes of Historical Transitions, Laws and Regulations, Social Problems and Illness and Disease. The following paragraphs reveal how the traditional Crow view the experience of pain. A discussion of Good Hurt is followed by the discussion of Bad Hurt.

### Good Hurt

The most significant and intriguing category is that of Good Hurt. Crow informants experience good hurt with the philosophy that pain is good if the pain serves a purpose and will lead to a favorable outcome.

The themes developed into the dimensions of Natural Life Events and Healing. Childbirth and Death are the themes which comprise the Natural Life Events dimension of Good Hurt. The second dimension of Good Hurt is that of Healing which includes the two themes of Traditional Practices and Modern Medicine.

Natural Life Events. Natural Life Events is the first dimension of the Good Hurt category and includes the themes of Childbirth and Death. Crow view childbirth and death simply as natural events that occur in one's lifetime. The Crow are able to disregard the pain, focusing only on the end result.

*Childbirth.* The first theme of the dimension Natural Life Events is that of Childbirth. Crow view childbirth as having two aspects, the first of "being born" and the second of "giving birth." One informant talked about a person's own birth as being the first and the best good hurt experienced in one's lifetime even though one cannot remember the event, stating, "It must be wonderful to come out of the mother and start your own life as an independent person."

The Crow consider the pain experienced during childbirth as a good hurt. As two mothers explained, "you get rewarded" and "you get a precious gift after the pain." The pain of childbirth is also considered a good hurt because children bring wealth to the family. The Crow measure wealth in the number of children in a family, rather than in the possession of material items. One informant believed that Crow women experience more difficulty in childbirth saying: "we have a hard time having babies. We are all small hipped and are built like the buffalo - broad shouldered, narrow hipped, with long skinny legs." Crow women accept this fact and willingly endure the pain.

*Death.* The second theme of the dimension Natural Life Events is Death. Death is a universal experience and some Crow informants believe that death is good. One informant exclaimed, "Death! Now there's a good hurt!" However, other informants consider death to be a bad hurt. Whether death is considered good or bad seems to depend on the situation, the experience, and whether death is good for a particular person. The Crow viewed the experience of pain as bad if the pain did not serve a purpose or was associated with emotional pain. Death as a good hurt is discussed in this section, and death as a bad hurt will be discussed later.

The Crow believe that both life and death serve a purpose. All key informants expressed the thought, "death is natural. It is part of life." Every life is considered sacred - the life of each tree, animal or bird, or

the life of a Human. One informant explained, "death is good if you use up more resources than you return or you become a bother." Another added, "If the person's time has come - if they are elderly. I never feel bad about a death except for some young person whose time hasn't come." Death is considered good if the person is suffering from diabetes or cancer and is consequently experiencing intense pain. The Crow feel that it is good to end the person's suffering and that death is good when one is no longer able to enjoy life. The Crow have a perspective that death is a natural process based on strong spiritual ties. As clearly articulated by an elderly Crow man, "We do not fear death, but embrace and experience it." The Crow anticipate crossing over to the "other side camp" without fear, as it is believed that the spirit continues and deceased loved ones are waiting.

Healing. The second dimension of the category Good Hurt is Healing. The Healing dimension developed into the themes of Traditional Practices and Modern Medicine.

*Traditional practices*. The first theme of Healing is that of Traditional Practices. Traditional practices are strongly linked to ancestral teachings of traditional medicine prior to reservation days. Traditional practices such as Rituals/ Ceremonies have evolved but still remain an inherent part of the Crow culture. The first component of traditional Healing is that of Indigenous Healers. Indigenous Healers consist of "medicine men" and

Clan Aunts/Uncles. Medicine men are essential to the traditional healing practices of the Crow.

The Crow medicine men receive knowledge of traditional methods of alleviating pain from visions and through oral communication with mentors. Some traditional ways to treat pain include "special roots . . . white mud . . . a drink of tea to alleviate pain." All Crow informants support the belief in traditional ways. Also, it should be explained that to the traditional Crow, "medicine" can mean not only the medicinal properties of herbs and other remedies, but also describe medicine as a source of power. For example, "A magnificent eagle appeared and communicated with this man. The eagle then became his medicine [power] throughout his lifetime."

Pain is an accepted and integral part of rituals and ceremonies. An example of a painful ritual utilized by medicine men is that of the vision quest. During vision quest ceremonies a person would travel to a remote high altitude area to seek a vision to provide direction and guidance. Medicine men seek visions for guidance and to gain further knowledge of medicine. One informant described a typical vision quest:

Medicine men would travel to a high point and stay by themselves for three to four days without water and food. They would build an oval rock formation, lay their buffalo robe down and sleep there. They would get up and go to the rim to pray and meditate. When young Crow men are seeking a vision - this guardian angel would guide and communicate with them throughout their lives, and then they are ready to seek a medicine. Even in these days, many Crow go to a sacred place to meditate and pray, and leave offerings of sage. They do a lot of praying using tobacco. They bring sage

and smudge themselves, because the smoke carries our prayers to the Almighty.

The Crow believe that the Medicine Man has the power to cure people suffering from physical, mental, or spiritual pain. One informant talked about a Native American diagnosed with liver cancer. The Medicine Man, using medicine and eagle whistles, was able to drain off the poison from the liver and heal that person even though the process was very painful. This example of Crow people willingly accepting and enduring the pain of traditional medicine is typical, strengthened by strong cultural beliefs.

The second type of Indigenous Healer is that of the Clan Aunts/Uncles. The clan aunts and uncles hold powerful "medicine." One informant talks about the "medicine of the little people." The informant's clan uncle utilized the "little people" to administer healing. The clan uncle would place the little people in the homes of the Crow person to protect the individuals living there from harm.

The second component of traditional practices is that of Rituals/ Ceremonies. The rituals and ceremonies discussed by the informants consisted of the sun dance, sweats, and peyote meetings. The sun dance will be discussed first, followed with a discussion of sweats and peyote meetings.

Historically the sun dance was utilized to measure the individual's ability to overcome pain and suffering. This rite of passage established

the individual's ability to be a leader. All the informants shared the view that "the pain people experience in the rituals is a good pain."

Government restrictions prohibit Crow people from practicing the pure form of the sun dance. The sun dancers would pierce their skin with thongs anchored to the center pole and then pull back while dancing until the thongs tore through the flesh. One informant related, "When I was a kid those men would bare themselves from the waist up. They had large scars on their chests. Some would place the thong in their back and had scars there." Through sacrifice and endurance of pain, the dancers demonstrated courage and the ability to withstand any pain that will be experienced throughout life. Today, the dancers inflict suffering upon themselves by withholding water and food during the entire sun dance, and are allowed a very minimum amount of sleep. The exertion and denial of sustenance to the sun dancer's body causes physical pain and a mental trance-like state which facilitates a vision experience. The Crow feel that during rituals, sincere sacrifice leads to favorable outcomes such as vision, medicines and the acquisition of knowledge. It is interesting to note that the original sun dance excluded women, but it is currently acceptable for women to participate and experience the pain and sacrifice of the sun dance. Deprivation of food and water induces pain and suffering and is described by a sun dancer:

You don't appreciate water until you've been in the sun dance. You remember every time you didn't finish a glass of water and poured half out! Water is basic to all life and without it, you have nothing.

One of the more common rituals is participation in the sweat lodge, often referred to as the small lodge. Most traditional Crow have constructed a personal sweat lodge where "heated rocks are placed in a pit and water is sprinkled on them, creating a lot of steam. They rub themselves with sage and this combined with the steam cleanses their body." It is commonly believed that regular use of the sweat lodge will heal most ailments. One informant related the experience of being in a sweat lodge:

The sweat lodge causes intense burning, and to go through the process of that intense burning is so important because it cleanses your mind, it cleanses your spirit, cleanses your spiritual body. It takes all your ailments away so that you don't have that inside your body anymore. But at the same time it's very painful for the participants.

The extreme heat, as described by participants, makes flesh feel like it is on fire. The hot humid air nearly suffocates the participant, making the verbalization of prayers a painful experience.

Peyote meetings are the final example of Rituals/Ceremonies. Peyote is a hallucinogenic substance that some traditional Crow use during special ceremonies, religious gatherings, and for treatment of pain. Only members of the Native American church are able to legally possess peyote. Peyote meetings at the Native American church last for many hours and would be

intolerable if not for the use of peyote. One Native American church member relates "Peyote makes you real numb when we sit in the church for hours on end and helps with visions. Sometimes we sit in one spot cross-legged for 12-16 hours and peyote helps keep us free from pain."

Another key informant told about a peyote meeting held for the informant's mother. The mother remained in severe pain following surgery for cancer. Members of the family arranged a "peyote meeting" and the meeting was recalled by the informant:

One of her uncles was a Medicine Man and he doctored her and told her it was in her stomach. The Medicine Man held a bone whistle to her stomach and from that whistle came out black water which filled up about five to seven big coffee cans, of whatever it was. It was thrown away and she went into remission for five or six years before she had to go in for another operation.

Many Crow actively participate in the sun dance, sweats, and the Native American Church. The Crow also understand when Crow members choose not to participate, and have the unique acceptance of the wide variation of practicing historical healing with contemporary healing. Crow families will sometimes invite respected indigenous healers to visit hospitalized family members. The healers (traditional and contemporary) blend resources to assist with healing. Some individual Crow incorporate both traditional practices with modern medicine but internally struggle through the transitions of melding both healing methods.























































































