



Candidates must complete this page and then give this cover and their final version of the extended essay to their supervisor.

Candidate session number

Candidate name

School name

Examination session (May or November)

MAY

Year

2015

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: ENG. B

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: How are Native American Medicinal  
Practices Linked to Native American Belief Systems?

### Candidate's declaration

*This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a mark of zero will be issued.*

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

Candidate's signature:

Date: 28.1.15



## Supervisor's report and declaration

The supervisor must complete this report, sign the declaration and then give the final version of the extended essay, with this cover attached, to the Diploma Programme coordinator.

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters)

Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

The candidate met all internal deadlines and was enthusiastic about the topic. Some time was wasted investigating the suitability to the subject area - in the end the artifacts studied seem to come under "Cultural Items" as recipes for food items or dishes "as a manifestation of culture".

The candidate contacted experts in the field and saved and read books related to the topic. The process has been worthwhile in preparing the candidate for the demands of university.

As a supervisor, it has been enjoyable working on a subject not always considered for study. ✓✓

This declaration must be signed by the supervisor; otherwise a mark of zero will be issued.

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

As per the section entitled "Responsibilities of the Supervisor" in the EE guide, the recommended number of hours spent with candidates is between 3 and 5 hours. Schools will be contacted when the number of hours is left blank, or where 0 hours are stated and there lacks an explanation. Schools will also be contacted in the event that number of hours spent is significantly excessive compared to the recommendation.

I spent 4 hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisor's signature:

Date: 3.3.2015



**Assessment form (for examiner use only)**

Candidate session number
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Criteria	Achievement level					
	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3	
A research question	<input type="text" value="2"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	
B introduction	<input type="text" value="2"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	
C investigation	<input type="text" value="3"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
D knowledge and understanding	<input type="text" value="2"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
E reasoned argument	<input type="text" value="2"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
F analysis and evaluation	<input type="text" value="2"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
G use of subject language	<input type="text" value="3"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
H conclusion	<input type="text" value="2"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	
I formal presentation	<input type="text" value="4"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
J abstract	<input type="text" value="2"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	
K holistic judgment	<input type="text" value="2"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
Total out of 36	<input type="text" value="26"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	

Name of examiner 1:  Examiner number:

(CAPITAL letters)

Name of examiner 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_

(CAPITAL letters)

Name of examiner 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_

(CAPITAL letters)

IB Assessment Centre use only: B: \_\_\_\_\_

IB Assessment Centre use only: A: \_\_\_\_\_

*How Are Native American Medicinal Practices Linked to Native American Belief Systems?* ✓

Session : May 2015 5

Word Count : 3580 ✓

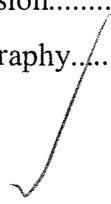
## Abstract

The purpose of this research was to identify how Native American medicinal practises are linked to Native American belief systems. The essay begins by introducing the significance of Native American's healing practises which operates in the context of spirituality, connection with the environment and community and this essay also introduces their cultural impact on the Anglosphere. This essay then continues and explains Native Americans unique ways of curing a patient physically and psychologically by using remedies such as herbs and ceremonies. This research then discusses the fundamental relationship between these medicinal practises and beliefs such as their soul, spirituality and environment including an issue involving the Oil Sands in Alberta which are having a negative impact on Native American's surroundings. The next part of the essay deals with a comparison between Native American healing and Western healing by explaining their different ways of dealing with illness. The final section argues why Western and Aboriginal medicine might or might not disagree with each other and this involves a discussion on society, a collaboration between these two types of healing and the patient's choice. By the end of the essay, we conclude that Native Americans medicinal practises are connected to everything that surround them : the Supernatural, the Earth and all the living things which belong to it. Moreover, this research concludes that Alternative medicine seeks to heal a patient without scientific traditions but rather with therapeutic methods whereas Western medicine seeks to healing a patient with scientific traditions.

Word Count : 245

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## Section I – Remedies and Ceremonies

Native American medicine is a type of therapy based on spirituality. Their healing process involves the use of medicinal herbs, smudging (burning sage or aromatic woods), music, ceremonies, prayers, communion with nature and going on a shamanic journey (i.e. retreat) (Mosby's Medical Dictionary – 2009). The Native American healer, also called the Medicine Man or the Shaman, is a person who is specialized in spiritual healing. He is given the power to aid fertility, procure good hunting and fishing and wreek pain. The Medicine Man describes an illness as the departure of the soul from a body. His role is then to remove the illness from the patient using different techniques in his rituals such as the utilization of herbs, bloodletting or the removal of the harmful virus from the patient's body. Some of these remedies are very effective although psychological remedies turn out to be the most effective and are preferred by healers (Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 2013).

Aboriginal medicine- as mentioned- regroups many kinds of treatment. One of the most crucial elements used in Native American holistic healing traditions are herbal remedies. There are 70 different types of herbal medicines, here are the 12 most favored remedies (The Johns Hopkins Health Library):

1. *Black Cohosh* : used for menopausal conditions.
2. *Echinacea* : prevents colds and flu and helps to strengthen the body's immune system.
3. *Evening Primrose* : helps reduce symptoms of arthritis, cardiovascular disease, premenstrual syndrome and hyperactivity in children.
4. *Feverfew* : aids menstrual cramps and headaches.
5. *Garlic* : used for high cholesterol and triglyceride levels and helps in preventing flu and other infectious diseases.
6. *Gingko Biloba* : aids memory loss and poor circulation.
7. *Ginseng* : boosts energy and resists stress.
8. *Goldenseal* : is an antiseptic : prevents infections.
9. *Green tea* : used to fight fatigue, weight loss, reduce tooth decay, lower cholesterol, prevents arteriosclerosis and certain cancers.

are all of these herbs indigenous?



- ✓ 10. *Hawthorn* : used for certain heart-related conditions (angina, atherosclerosis, congestive heart failure and high blood pressure).
- ✓ 11. *Saw Palmetto* : used in the treatment of an enlarged prostate in men over age 50.
- ✓ 12. *St John's wort* : treatment for mental disorders (e.g. depression).

Aboriginal rituals also involve ceremonies, the main goal of which is to create, regain, offer thanks for and moreover strongly connect the harmony and balance of the spirit and body with the natural environment. These ceremonies are performed in order to heal the connection between oneself and the spirit world, the natural environment and their relatives. During these ceremonies many more types of alternative healing practices are used, such as: the sweat lodge, the vision quest, blessing way, smudging, pipe and Sun Dance ceremonies.

*explanation*

The Sweat Lodge Ceremony is the most common ceremony of all. It consists of a purification which leads to a fresh start to life and it is a good way to ensure good relations and to maintain mental, physical, and spiritual wellness in oneself. The Vision Quest, however, is a ritual which takes place during puberty. It consists of finding oneself by fasting and isolating himself/herself from his/her daily life. This helps the individual to focus on the meaning and purpose of life from supernatural forces (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2009) (Garrett, 2006). The Smudging Ceremony is based on purifying people, homes, sacred objects or to communicate with a Greater Spirit. In order for the cleansing to occur, a smoke containing sage, cedar, lavender and sweet grass is used. Many healers say that if an individual walks through the smoke of a stranger, « good » and « bad » medicine is passed to him/her. Furthermore, the Blessing Way has the purpose of giving harmony and balance to the nation, community, family and individual. This healing takes place through singing and praying, the following extract is from a Navajo Blessing Way chant (Oswalt & Neely, 1996) which shows us how powerful the connection is between the environment (Earth) and Life :

*descriptive*

*Earth's feet become my feet, thereby I go through life.  
 Its legs become my legs, thereby I go through life.  
 Long life-happiness I am wherever I will go.  
 Before me it is blessed wherever I will go,*

*Behind me it is blessed wherever I will go,  
It has become blessed again, it has become blessed again !*

The line “*Long life-happiness I am wherever I will go*” demonstrates powerful words such as Long, Life, Happiness and Wherever. These meaningful words represent the environment giving a never-ending happiness to Aboriginal people.

Additionally, the Pipe Ceremony is used to connect physical and spiritual worlds. Some healers determine this healing practice as the prayers of the person into smoke, which is the spiritual world (Garrett- 2006). Finally, the Sun Dance Ceremony is a complicated ritual essentially involving several days of fasting, group dancing and a ritual of self-torture (Houghton Mifflin Company – 2009).

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## Section II – Native American’s Beliefs

### *Relationship between medicinal practises and Self/Soul*

Having been introduced to healing treatment processes, we are now going to discuss how their therapeutic and medicinal practises relate to their selves and their souls.

Western medicine looks at illness as the absence of being healthy, whereas Natives believe that illness is natural. This means that we have to seek for illness rather than treat illness. Being healthy means being in good terms with the Supernatural beings. When you are injured or ill it is in your interest to come back into balance with the World. The Navajo, who are the largest Native American tribe of the United States (The Navajo Nation Government, 2011), call it « *hozho* » (pronounced hózhó) which means harmony, balance and « *oneness* ». The Navajo define it as Beauty. They also say that there is no such thing as fighting evil because evil is as essential as good. Everyone’s task is to live in balance between these extremes. As for the soul, soul loss is one of the causes of illness. According to the professor of Native American Studies Walter Fleming whom I have contacted in October 2014, claimed that in the Inuit belief (also known as Eskimos) the soul can leave the body and not come back. This can happen while sleeping or the result of an injury. So the relationship between healing practises and the soul is straightforward.

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He also implies that from the point of view of different tribes, for instance The Cheyenne believe that the soul is located in the back of the neck and if anyone has had a near death experience that person could feel a sort of pain in the back of the neck which shows the soul that is ready to leave.

rather random choice of beliefs - the NA groups varied greatly -

### *Relationship between medicinal practises and Spirituality*

The fundamental relationship which is the founding block of their healing practices is spirituality. In most Native American traditions, the supernatural world is where the spirits live, help, guide and heal the living. Other aboriginal traditions believe that the Creator (known as the single higher power that does not refer to any particular gender) planted a Sacred Tree where healing and security can be found. Its roots meet into the body of Mother Earth, its exterior part represents giving thanks for all life. Moreover, the fruits produced from the Tree show a path, which leads to love, wisdom, justice, compassion, courage, respect and modesty (Four Worlds Development Project, 1989). Its branches and leaves appear as a metaphor in which they expose themselves to the wind. This demonstrates the extent to which Native Americans have relied on spiritual traditions, which still continue to this day. (Garrett- 2006)

There are other aspects related to faith that take place in Native American spiritual beliefs. According to Michael T. Garret, plants and animals take part in the spirit world. The spirit world is connected to the physical world and it exists before entering into a physical body and it will still exist when the body dies. For human beings, they contain a mind, body and spirit. Thereupon, an illness will affect all three of them. "Natural unwellness" is breaking the law of Creation (performing in a ceremony under the influence of drugs, for example) whereas "unnatural unwellness" is provoked by witchcraft from negative intentions. Health problems all come back to our responsibility to live in harmony with our environment and within our inner self. This is why wellness and spirituality are so deeply linked and are a part of life. (Garrett -2006)

entirely ✓



*Relationship between medicinal practises and the environment*

The Circle is a symbol, which represents the environment but above all it embodies power, relation, peace and unity. The Circle, always depicted in Native American medicine and art, is composed of sacred numbers. The numbers four and/or seven are very significant to Native traditions. The number four symbolizes the East, South, West, North in a form of a circle and the number seven symbolizes the Sky, Earth, centre and the four directions as well. This is all related to the Circle of Life which is the symbol of harmony and balance of the mind, body and spirit with the environment and the spirit world. The Circle of Life is also the assumption that all living things are alive and are spiritual beings (animals, plants, stars, moon, water, fire, rain, Earth, Sun, sky, rocks). According to Chief Seattle of the Suquamish tribe, all living things are connected and have to be respected, it is like the blood that unites one family. According to Native traditions, “Good Medicine” is defined as being in harmony with the universe and being in balance. Therefore “Bad Medicine”, which leads you to illness is referred to an imbalance and disharmony with the universe. In addition, life energy is considered a healing energy which is translated into healing music. For example, there are songs and dances about the bear, beaver or rabbit who represent symbols (which have different meanings from one tribe to another) to either tribes, families or individuals and they bring positive energy to them. (Garrett, 2006), (Kathy Weiser, 2013)

*mostly description  
the argument  
is not being  
made clear*

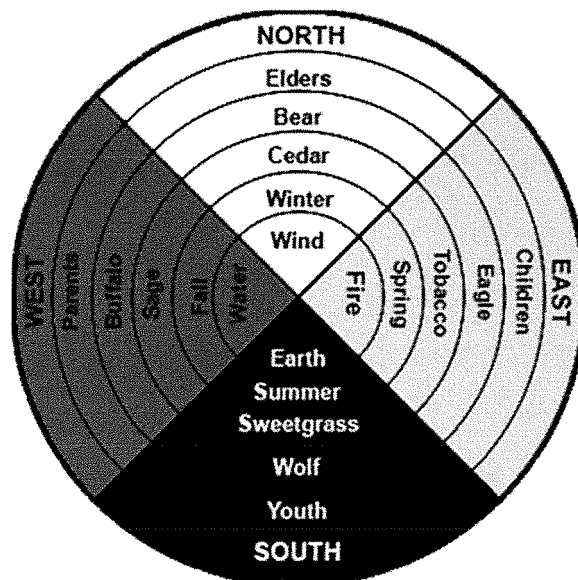


Figure 1. The Aboriginal Spiral of Medicine and Life.

Retrieved from [http://solar.psu.edu/2007/almanac\\_medicine\\_wheel.aspx?lang=en](http://solar.psu.edu/2007/almanac_medicine_wheel.aspx?lang=en)

I will now consider the Oil Sands in Alberta, which is an example that relates to Native American's environment and health. For decades, Native Americans have been worrying about the increase of oil sands in northern Alberta that affect water and air quality and the tribes living in the local wilderness. Native Americans rely on water and air quality, to help them to hunt, fish, cook, drink and bath. Their health plays an important role in this issue. The results of an investigation showed:

“30% increase in Cancers compared with expected rates over the last 12 years, a three-fold increase in leukemias and lymphomas which according to Natural Resources Defence Council Senior Scientist Dr. Gina Salomon have been caused by petroleum products, a seven-fold increase in bile duct cancers and other cancers such as sarcomas and lung cancers in women”. (The Alberta Cancer Board – 2010)

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Furthermore, oil sands mining operations are permitted to divert 604 millions cubic meters of water annually from the Athabasca River which is equivalent of a city of three million people. This issue involving pollution has brought long discussions between the Government of Alberta and more than 700,000 Native Americans. (Droitsch and Simieritsch – 2010). Water plays an important role in their environment because it does not only help them for drinking and bathing; it symbolizes life, purity and fertility. Running water is considered as the continuity of life and the flow of time. Since fish is their main source of food, they notably rely on rivers for fishing (Linda Alchin – 2014). As mentionned in this section, all living things are connected and have to be respected. If they are not respected, illness will take over and this invokes the imbalance or disharmony with the universe. It is essential for Aboriginal people to rely on their environment: It is the key to life.

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### Section III – Native American Healing Compared to Western Healing

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Western medicine is effective for a number of diseases for which traditional medicine has no effective remedies. For example, in traditional medicine their remedies (specifically herbal medicines) are effective on diseases and ailments which are common: *Echinacea* for preventing colds and flu or *Quinine* for pain. However, there are now diseases such as AIDS or Diabetes for which Native Americans have no

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western diseases?

remedies. The other difference is in the immediacy of action. According to Walter Fleming, the Department Head and Professor of Native American Studies at the Montana State University, modern pharmaceutical processes can make medicine effective quicker and stronger, so a patient might rather take a painkiller that would act sooner on his immune system than herbal medicine which would take longer to heal. The other factor is that Western medicine views differently illness than traditional communities, Western medicine perceives physical illness and mental illness and focuses on unique body parts. Their remedies may include surgery, a combination of medicine and/or therapy. Whereas traditional healers believe in physical, mental and most importantly spiritual illnesses. One has to begin with the source of illness. For example, you get shot by a gun in your leg (source of pain/illness). In Western medicine, the surgeon takes out the bullet, cleans up any internal damage and prescribes you antibiotics to prevent any infection. The medicine man will ask you why you got shot in the first place and tell you that your spiritual protection against these sorts of accidents was not strong enough. He will then heal the wound and he will advise the patient to attend a ceremony to provide better protection. In the case of the Navajo, an illness can be caused by soul loss, an entry of an unknown substance in the body, being in contact with places associated to the dead or being in contact with a non-Navajo. The manifestations of these illnesses are fever and strong fatigue. The patient is then diagnosed by a crystal gazer who is someone who detects the origin of these manifestations which can be someone trying to harm her/him. The patient is then sent to a medicine man for a proper ceremony. The ceremony may involve a sand painting on the floor, the patient is then placed on the painting under the belief that he or she will absorb the power embodied by the painting. Finally, Native American Medicine and Western Medicine have a different perspective on "madness". In a Native American culture, if he or she is hearing voices which is represented as acting abnormally, this person is considered as having received a gift from the Supernatural. They are considered as being in better communication with the Supernatural than others. In Western medicine, madness is an unacceptable behaviour and those who suffer from it must be separated from society. In Western medicine, the main goal is the destruction of the disease and in Native American medicine the healer wants the patient to learn from their disease for instance as if the disease wanted to transmit a message to the patient (Johnston – 2004). The doctor would ask the patient if there are any diseases in his/her family

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explain the power



whereas the Medicine man would ask how his/her environment is doing: "Are the fish in your river healthy?"(Johnston – 2004) (Fleming – 2014)

## Section IV – Can We Say that Western Medicine Does Not Support Aboriginal Medicine?

According to the professor Walter Fleming, where Western and Aboriginal medicine might disagree is when a patient would rather use a less effective Native treatment than an effective treatment in Western medicine because this patient might prefer being treated by Aboriginal medicine to Western medicine. Moreover, Western medicine might not support Native American's medicine because 80% of the world's population cannot afford Western medicine, so this helps Aboriginal medicine be more integrated into healthcare, especially when the World Health Organization decided to make them join national healthcare programs and administrations (Johnston – 2004). However, there are cases where Western and Native American practises don't mind collaborating together. For instance, if a Native mother delivers a still-born child, Western medicine will allow her a safe deliver and a Native practitioner will provide her the spiritual healing. More than 200 herbal medicines have been included in the US Pharmacopoeia, which is an organization that helps ensure the quality of medicines (U.S. Pharmacopeial Convention - 2014) (Johnston – 2004). Moreover, many modern remedies contain herbal medicines in them so we can call this a sort of contribution that Native Americans have made to Western medicine. ✓

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Native American medicinal practises are linked to their belief systems in a way that show us that everything is alive in a spiritual way and therefore connected. Their medicinal practises are not only about healing one's disease but also about believing in everything that is spiritual, environmental and our inner-power. Those who believe in these aspects will start to respect them and be in harmony with the universe. It is like a vicious circle. If you are not in harmony with the universe, illness will come to you. Their treatments such as ceremonies and herbal remedies have showed us a unique type of physical and psychological healing. This essay has also described a comparison between Western and Alternative medicine, which ✓

showed two types of healing with diverse beliefs and different ways of treating a patient. However, Western and Alternative medicine still find ways of collaborating together and keeping themselves active so that they can still both be considered as healing practises in this society.

*This is a topic that almost was - Unfortunately, it relies very much on description and a very general view of Native Americans, who actually were as diverse in culture as any region of the world. There is some knowledge shown - but the analysis is not entirely clear. Perhaps something more direct linking the beliefs of a people and the practices medically would help.*

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